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BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE.

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THE DAILY ROUND.

I. THE BURNING OF THE RAILWAY STATION.

It was in April 1919. The district was close to the centre of the disturbances, and daily reports were coming in of the cutting of the telegraph-wires and of the removal of lengths of railway line with the intention of wrecking the troop-trains which were carrying sepoys to quell the disorder in Lahore, Amritsar, and Gujranwala. The bridges were guarded by regular troops, but there were none to spare for the track.

An order had been issued that morning to the headmen of every village through whose lands any part of a railway ran, that they must provide patrols on the line by day, and guards on the stations by night. Many of the headmen had guns of their own, usually only muzzle-loaders, and they were told to carry them. Those who had no guns were offered the loan of weapons from the storeroom at headquarters, where private arms, which have been confiscated or of which the licences have lapsed and not been renewed, are kept. The first-comers were able to borrow revolvers, Winchester repeaters, or double-barrelled breech-loading shot-guns; the late arrivals had to be content with swords, muzzle-loaders, and all kinds of queer antiquated weapons, which might frighten but could hardly hurt. For the night-guards bodies of men were required to sleep on the stations, and turn out in pairs from time to time to patrol the line on either side. Several hundred hurricane lanterns were issued and distributed all over the district for these night-watchers. Manufacturers may be glad to hear why their 1919 sales were so large.

Later on, civil and military co-operation was not quite per-

fect; for the military armoured cars which patrolled the lines were liable to shoot at sight the unfortunate watchers, whom they suspected to be rebels tampering with the lines; and the watchers not unnaturally were apt to desert their posts and hide in the fields just when they saw an armoured car coming. This led to reports by the military that the civil arrangements for guarding the line were most inadequate, as no guards were ever to be seen. It was suggested that all watchers should be provided with conspicuous scarlet armlets, something like Red Cross badges; but this plan was rejected as more likely to provide immunity to badmashes, who could easily borrow or steal or make an armlet, and then proceed to remove a line with impunity.

But to return to the first day on which the lines were guarded and when the arrangements were not yet in proper working order. That very night a small station on a branch line was burned down. The station-master was a feeble youth of the shopkeeping class, recently from school, and of the Arya Samaj sect, which is violently national, and so anti-British. His story was that about 10 P.M., when the sweeper and the water-carrier were lying asleep on the platform, a band of about thirty men, who had their turbans bound round their chins to conceal their features, came up, demanded his keys from him, opened the office, took out a tin of kerosene oil which was there, sprinkled it on the woodwork of the station, and set it alight. He said that he had lain on his bed all the time with his head under the bedclothes. The sweeper and the water-carrier sometimes said they had seen no one, sometimes that they had. No reliance could be put on their contradictory statements, but apparently they did not corroborate the station-master's statement. There was no guard on the station, but a village patrol had left it only half an hour before the flames and smoke aroused the residents of the same village half a mile away, who arrived on the scene too late to catch the incendiaries or to extinguish the flames.

Next morning the Superintendent of Police—an Englishman who had been born in India, spoke the language like a native, and could understand the Punjabi mind as few imported Englishmen could—was on the spot, and found the stolen cash-box with some money in it lying in the bushes beside the line some 100 yards from the station. So the incendiaries were no thieves, else they would not have thrown away a cash-box which at every jog rattled out the secret of the coin inside. Inquiries at all the surrounding villages failed to elicit any clue. At last the policeman came to the conclusion that the station-master's story was a yarn, and that he had himself—a late student, an Arya Samajist, and an inhabitant of a notoriously

seditious village—set his station afire. He was reported to the railway authorities for dismissal as a suspect revolutionary.

Some months later, under a new Superintendent, whose zeal was unbounded, the truth was discovered. Two Sikhs, who had been emigrants in Vancouver, where Indian schemes of revolution and revolt have for years been freely hatched, told him that they knew who had burned the station and could get together the necessary proofs. One of these men had been suspected of revolutionary ideas himself, but the other had, when in Vancouver, given valuable information to the authorities about the plots which were discussed there. They arranged a drinking-party with those whom they accused of the arson; a police officer and an Indian gentleman were concealed where they could hear the talk of the drinking-party, and in their cups the story of the burning of the station was graphically and faithfully described. A fuller confession could not have been wished for. The chief incendiaries were the five headmen of a village a mile distant from the station. How the men were collected for the enterprise, and every step of the circuitous route from the village to the railway line, and down the railway line from the opposite direction to the village, was described. One of the headmen and several of the menials who were included in the band that had visited the station turned King's evidence. The story of the station-master was true: he was guilty of no more than fright, which sent his head under the bedclothes as a safer proceeding than raising an alarm. In the still night air of the bare Punjab plains a cry for help could have been heard easily in two or three villages around, but the timid bania knew that it might cost him his life to utter that cry, and, after all, was not the rumour abroad that British rule was at an end?

The prosecution case was complete, but the policy of yielding to agitators was now in full swing; attacks on the British Government were no longer to be called "sedition," and no prosecutions for offences committed in the April rebellion were to be instituted without the special sanction of Government. Even to punish arson might be represented as repression, and Government wished to avoid any appearance of maintaining law and order if the lawless could also claim to be revolutionaries. Most of those convicted of offences in April had been released at Christmas by the King's clemency; and would it not be invidious to send to gaol offenders who had been clever enough to avoid detection over Christmas, and who, if they were now convicted, could not hope for deliverance by another Christmas gift? So the lesson was taught that even arson, if it is for political ends and can escape detection for a little, will not be punished.

The police were snubbed, and have learned not to be too officious and to treat as crime acts which are merely revolutionary. Loyal Indians have been warned that it is better not to help the police to discover malefactors, for they merely make themselves unpopular and earn no thanks.

II. THE OFFICE CAT.

The output of written papers from a Government office in India comes to several tons in a year. The judicial files weigh the heaviest, for they contain *in extenso* every order and almost every eyewink of the court and every word uttered by every witness; and the witnesses are very many, for the scales of justice made in India, like those of the grocer, respond to quantity, not to quality. A pound of lies, made up to look like truth, outweighs 12 ounces of truth almost as surely as a pound of margarine weighs down 12 ounces of butter. But hardly anything ever happens which does not give excuse to somebody for starting one or even more files—it may be only the birth of a baby who is just not quite an ordinary baby, or the advent of a locust or a book to be rebound. There was once a celebrated file all about the proper way to enter in Doomsday Book the birth of a second posthumous son. All come at last to rest in the record-room.

The daily pile of miscellaneous papers needing a district officer's orders may stand a yard high in the morning, towering over the head of the clerk who sits on the ground and sing-songs them out for orders in a monotone that soothes to slumber; but in the evening they are gone about their business, scattered everywhere, never perhaps to meet again till they too come some day to rest in the record-room. Some files grow very old and weary before they reach their haven finally disposed of and ready for an obituary notice in the shape of an index. Others are bright little fellows, which die early and are consigned to the record-room with their edges still fresh and their eyelet holes untorn by the world's hard usage.

Some people have considered that files are merely a by-product of official activity, but the deepest thinkers regard them as much more than this, and even as the final cause of Government. However this may be, Government produces files at a rate beyond the achievements of any mothers of which zoology tells, and would soon be swamped in her own outpourings if she did not arrange for the early destruction of most of them. So there is a kind of elaborate death-warrant showing what files are to be destroyed after one year, what after two years or six years, and so on, reaching up to an ordained immortality for

the most worthy. The less honoured files have only a short rest, and then are hurried off to the gaol to be repulped into paper, and to become by a process of metempsychosis the raw material of a new generation of files.

But rats live in record-rooms, and rats cannot recognise and respect those files which are destined to live for ever. One simple Deputy Commissioner thought it would be a reasonable precaution to keep a cat in the record-room. Puss was acquired and passed the nights in the file mausoleum, but she did not grow fat on the rats. Either a too ratty diet did not suit her, or perhaps the excessive exertion of climbing the racks to catch the rats called for fatty as well as ratty food. Anyway, the humane Deputy Commissioner ordered that she should be given a drink of milk every morning. To make sure that the cat and not the office sweeper drank the milk, the sitting of the court opened in future not with prayers but with a food parade of one cat, one sweeper, one saucer of milk, and one dignified and portly office superintendent. It was like the grand parade of office clerks which Government prescribes in malaria seasons in order that one tabloid of five grains of quinine may be placed on each tongue. The cat did not grow much fatter: perhaps the formality of the parade upset her digestion.

But, alas! the Deputy Commissioner had forgotten a correction slip (No. 379 B) to a circular. Far away in the provincial capital the Accountant-General had not forgotten it, and saw in a contingent bill of March, and again in one of April, "Milk for cat, Rs. 2." Heavens! two of the most admired of all Government's rules have been broken. A district officer has increased the district establishment without the sanction of Government, and he has incurred a recurring charge. Another file has been born, and some day pussy will guard her own life-history from the rats. But this is a file which will have a long life of objection and reply, of explanation, of justification, and of Government sanctions before it comes to rest. Does "establishment" include a cat or only those who can produce or contribute to a file? If the cat is changed every month, would the charge still be a recurring one? Are traps, or poison, or a cat the cheapest weapon against rats? Such are the momentous questions to be threshed out, and the file continues its glorious existence till it produces at last a crop of mature decisions.

The Deputy Commissioner went home on leave and left these great questions still unsettled. Perhaps they were never settled. But certainly the Deputy Commissioner was wrong, for in 1919 the rioters burned down the record-room, and all pussy's efforts to save the files were lost.

III. KINE SLAUGHTER.

Chet Ram, Dina Nath, and a dozen other Hindu shopkeepers of Raipur, a large village, mainly Mahomedan, on a main road and railway, present a petition to the District Magistrate that the Mahomedans of the village are slaughtering cows for food in their houses, and outraging the religious feelings of the poor Hindus. Never before, say they, have cattle been slaughtered in sacred Raipur. The faces of some are smug with satisfaction at being the first in with their petition; others ooze out excitement at once more downing the hated Mahomedans with an anti-cow-killing campaign. Ten minutes later an even greater crowd of Mahomedans—butchers, landowners, and headmen—appear with the inevitable cross-petition complaining that as little Khuda Bakhsh (Theodore, as we should say) was carrying home the evening dinner of beefsteak he was set upon by Sita Ram, who abused him and beat him till he was unconscious. (In the India of petitions no one is ever beaten without becoming unconscious.) What are poor Mahomedans to do in these days when beef alone is cheap and they have lived on beef and slaughtered cows for many generations?

Both parties are told that the cases will be decided that day week on the spot. But the week has not passed when the chief headman comes to the District Magistrate and tells him that unless special police are sent out at once there will be a riot between Hindus and Mahomedans. So off go the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police each in his motor to the village. As the police have not yet been supplied with motor-lorries or any form of transport which is likely to enable them to reach riots before everything is over, they have to rattle out in antediluvian "palki" carriages — square boxes on broken springs dragged by pairs of angular broken-kneed ponies, which may travel six miles an hour under a constant lash, and may at any time leave the carriages behind owing to the snapping of the string repairs to the harness. Four men inside, four on the top of the roof, and another on the box —contrary to all police regulations, but what care the police? —they form a pantomime procession. The generals arrive long before their army; but even two Englishmen are enough to stop any idea of rioting if ever there was one.

The District Magistrate has both parties up before him, and, having ascertained that cow-killing has long been customary in Raipur, orders, under a Punjab law, that the Mahomedans shall no longer slaughter in their houses, which may offend Hindus living near by, but may build a slaughter-house outside the village, and surround it with a wall high

enough to save passing Hindus from the horrid sight of blood and carcasses. The leading Hindus are put on security to keep the peace. They all go off—the Mahomedans to select a site for the slaughter-house, the Hindus to arrange for the inevitable appeal to the Commissioner. The site is selected and approved as being far away from the lands and houses of the Hindus, and the enclosure wall is begun. There is no delay, as the Mahomedans want to eat beef and they cannot slaughter till the enclosure is ready. The Hindus, on the other hand, know that by using every possible delay they can cause more trouble to their opponents. So they do not lodge their appeal till the latest date allowed by law, when the wall is already reaching a man's height. They plead that passers-by on the highroad 100 yards away, and especially women going to draw water at a certain well, might have their eyes polluted with the sight of the baskets of meat going into the town.

The cunning Hindu, who sold his cow last week to a Mahomedan butcher, knows how official India never expresses outspoken condemnation of the silly and uneconomic superstition of the sacred cow, but grows nervous and whispers whenever he chooses to start a cow-killing scare. So the Hindus have been plying the central Government with telegrams about "Mahomedan outrage," carefully calculated to bring on a fit of nerves, to be communicated to the Commissioner by calls for "necessary action and report."

Now it is the turn of the Commissioner to visit the village. He upholds the order requiring the Mahomedans to build a slaughter-house, but accepts the Hindus' objections to the site selected. He chooses another piece of land, which he sees is recorded in the land records as common land in the occupation of a certain Mahomedan nawab. Now the fat is in the fire. The rare event of a mistake in the land records has occurred. The site is *not* in the possession of the nawab, and *is* owned by Hindus—the Commissioner had forgotten to look up the ownership of the common land. The poor Mahomedans have spent Rs. 200 on their wall, and are now ordered to abandon that wall and start building another slaughter-house on Hindus' land. If they venture to do as they are ordered, there is likely to be a tragedy of errors. The intervention of the big gun has not been successful. The only course open to the District Magistrate is that he should ask the Commissioner to rescind his order and accept the original settlement. But commissioners do not like their mistakes pointed out to them—even mistakes which may very easily lead to bloodshed.

MY FRIEND THE SWAN.

BY C. E. MONTAGUE.

THE war had perished beyond all hope of revival; the Genius of Famine could almost be heard stalking along the corridors of our Ministries of Co-ordination, Information, and Demonstration. The long howling of wolves approaching the patent swing-doors had begun to chill the young blood of the brave and the fair, upon whom war had called to warm both their hands for so long at the fire of life on those convenient premises; into the ruder lake-dwellings still to be traced by the traveller crossing St James's Park a sense of the horrors of war, its worst, its post-war ones, was making its way. Thus may poor Pharaoh have felt in his dream when the seven lean and ill-favoured kine, "such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness," came up after the seven fat kine and ate them without bulging.

Under this bludgeon stroke of fate no head that I know was more intrepidly unbowed than that which bore on its obverse side the comely and imperturbable face of Colin March. He was now twenty-five. A letter of his found me stuck at the Domhof, Cologne, the Christmas after the glorious and fatal 11th of November. Colin had written on War Office paper, the War Office being just then his strategic base and the seat of his government over circumstance. He had also, somewhat regally, popped his letter into the King's Messenger's bag, distrusting the speed of the common post of our armies.

From his War Office he wrote, "I sit within this frowning pile, and I frown worse than it." Then I knew his spirits were high. He went on, "'Let me have war, say I,' as my friend Shakspeare says: 'It's sprightly, waking, audible, and full of vent.'" Then I felt pretty sure that he was as glad the whistle had blown as any old infantry colonel who wanted no more of his men to be chipped. He went on to mention a dear friend of ours, Claude Barbason. Being a Regular, Claude would have to collapse after the war—"like other sausage balloons," Colin vulgarly wrote—from the size of a Brigadier-General to that of a mere common Captain. "Still," Colin wrote, "my mind is easy about him. As long as there's any sort of Q side up above, as our friend the Bard says, that 'providently caters for the sparrow,' Claude's rations are safe."

"Hullo!" I thought, "good deal of Shakspeare lying about!" And again, a few lines lower down, I read,

"What says the downy old Swan of Avon about it?" followed by some queer quotation. Strange! Saul had come off as one of the saints. But Colin one of the pedants! No! He must have got a new game on. He must be writing like this, playing the ripe Shakspearean, to make me prick up my ears, before he let on. That would be quite in his line. He had fished in his time; he knew how to use ground bait.

Yes, it was a game—a beginning, as Colin said when I came home in May, of the reconstruction of Europe. It all came of a tip that had come indirectly to Colin from one who could not be wrong if the British Constitution is right. Colin's father, the old ambassador, had been there when King Edward met, at a dinner, the greatest of all the Shakspearean pundits. "Stick to Shakspeare, Mr Bowles," the prudent sovereign had said to the freely perspiring student; "there's money in him." Colin had, as Columbia says, figured on this. All sorts and conditions of men, he reflected, were would-be consumers of Shakspeare. All tried to quote him. Teacher and preacher and politician and trader—all of them wedged in a bit of his stuff, if they could, among their own drivel. Rightly seen, the plays were a quarry—only better; all the stone was ready cut. They were what the Colosseum had been when any jerry-builder in Rome could still go in and steal a load of Titus' or Domitian's building material. But organisation was needed—the "big business" touch. No Geddes or Selfridge had come in as yet to lead the parched horse of Demand to the abounding waters of Supply and make him drink there at a reasonable tariff. A few poor shabby old tags—"The play's the thing," "Put money in thy purse," "To thine own self be true," and so on—were about all that the private consumer could put his hand on. Why, it was as if we were still only scraping a few shaley scuttles of coal, with a shovel, off the surface of Northumberland. Colin figured hard. Then he acted.

You will recall how in that summer of 1919 the fruits of what looked like a richer national culture began to load and bless our advertisement hoardings. Foker's Prime London Ales were, for the first time, recommended to us on those engaging "three-column blocks" of Autolycus singing "A quart of ale is a dish for a king." In extenuation of that mortal sin against the honour of the vine, the Golden Tagus New Australian Port, the preference of Mr Justice Silence for "A cup of wine that's brisk and fine" was cited, with ingenious effrontery, a few weeks later. "Let me have men about me that are fat" (Froud's Fast Filling Breakfast Food), and "Not china dishes, but very good dishes" (Wild's War Saving Dinner Stoneware) were

other works of Colin's first period. Like many other artists he was to have three periods. Somebody said that these early strivings of his first period made the wall of a Tube station look as if an ounce of the stuff that excites ginger-beer had been thrown into a large puddle: a patch, here and there, of the puddle capered and frisked feebly. That was how Colin, the ex-Service man, began to feel his way back into the ranks of civil industry.

First he had made out a list of those wise traders who advertise most. This took him the last two months of his war service. From out the unsuspecting herd, catalogued in this way, he would next mark down for the chase some veritable stag of ten, like the eponymous owner of Sprot's Spermaceti Rupture Cure. Then he would steal seductively up on the creature, holding out in his hand, as it were, a sealed packet and praising its unstated contents. Was that particular quarry aware, he would ask, that our national poet had written as if he had never had a thought in his mind except to assist in advertising the quarry's business? Then, while the hunted thing stood spellbound, moveless as a tickled trout, Colin would swiftly explain that the Shakspeare Publicity Trust had the goods, that the fee was—for goods that were goodness itself—a mere bagatelle: and if any client would simply say he was disappointed the Trust would refund. What could be fairer?

The bargain once struck, Colin would bring out his pearl. To Sprot, the Spermaceti Rupture Curer, he would present the prescription cited by Hotspur:—

> "The sovereign'st thing on earth
> Was parmaceti for an inward bruise."

For Messrs Starr of Dundee, the spirited authors of that cheap and unstable adhesive, North Star Gum, he would have ready the testimonial of Julius Cæsar:—

> "constant as the Northern Star,
> Of whose true-fixed and resting quality
> There is no fellow in the firmament."

You, a person of fastidious taste, may not think highly of these sallies. Nor, I suppose, would you think much of a Red Palmer fly for your luncheon. But that is only because you are no trout. And if you were a Sprot or a Starr you would know the makings of a good puff when you saw them. Colin knew the element he worked in. "I've only slipped up once," he said. "Remember the 'Tempest'?—how our poor aboriginal friend said that the white settler used to pet him at first—gave him 'water with berries in't'? Wouldn't you say that was simply written for Jellaby's Genuine Juniper Gin?"

No! I wouldn't. Nor would Colin. His eyes twinkled demurely. I saw that he had been tempering business with mischief. I let him run on.

"No! With an absolute No the cloudy distiller, Jellaby, turns me his back. Only too much damn talk about water already, he says, ever since the war regulations drew the teeth of the stuff. I asked, did he think of a little crusade against war weakness in strong waters. You see, I might have romped in with my 'Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia!' Not he! Barred the whole topic. Next day—such is my rugged vicissitudinous life—I hit Partletts, the motoring overcoat people, right between wind and water—nothing but just 'There's a dish of leather coats for you,' out of the big drink in old Shallow's orchard. In art all the great things are simple. That one and 'Tell me, where is fancy bred?' for the Viennese baker in Bond Street—Swiss now, of course—are two of my brightest particular winners."

I must have grunted.

"All very well," Colin said, "but I can't afford to stick at a pun. A poor fellow must live. As an artist pure and simple the thing I prefer is a sweet pretty way that I have of slipping into a subject.

'When all aloud the wind doth blow,
And coughing drowns the parson's saw,'

may not be a very subtle approach, I'll allow, to Presto's Cough Drops. But mark the airy ease of my Shakspearean glide into Stoolt's Tourist Ticket announcements—

'Talking of the Alps and Apennines,
The Pyrenean and the River Po, . . .'

O, le grand Edouard connaissait son monde."

Colin had what, I fancy, must be the specific gift of the born organiser. Whatsoever his hand found to do, he could find some one else to go on doing it for him, for both of their goods, while Colin went off with a light heart to conquer new worlds. He now pitched on Willan, an old Merton man who had wit and knew Shakspeare by heart, but had never known how to market these wares for himself. To him Colin handed over the charge of the trade advertisement branch of the Shakspeare Publicity Trust. Willan minded the shop, at a liberal stipend; Colin's adventuring mind took once more to the road.

As he went he reflected. People who quarrelled were always hauling Shakspeare in if they could. "'Tell truth,' as Shakspeare says, 'and shame the Devil,'" he heard some of them say, in their spite, where simpler souls would yell "Liar!" Or else, in the line of unctuous irony, somebody's moral code was "'more honoured in the breach,' as Shakspeare says, 'than the observance.'" Always, mark, "as Shakspeare says": never "as Hotspur" or "as Hamlet says." Why not show the poor creatures how to do, to some purpose, what they were now so impotently attempting? Why not found a completely new trade in munitions?

"You see," Colin said,

"when a man has one of these fads that they all fight about, he wants to dress it up to the nines in some suit of words or other. So he may do any one of three things. (1) He may cut out and make it a brand-new suit on his own. That's to say, he may be Shaw or Whibley or Colvin or Wells, if he can—one of the top-hole polemical dragons. If so, he's of no use to me. Or (2) he may borrow, gratis, a greasy, shiny old suit of misfitting Shakspearean slop clobber, everybody else's cast-off reach-me-downs like 'All the world's a stage,' 'The quality of mercy is not strained'—all that sort of real rag-and-bone man's stock. Or (3) he can buy a decent Shakspearean suit, ready-made but unused, from a respectable tailor. Well, I have a mission to group number two. I'm out to lift it into group three. I'm the respectable tailor. I notice some poor anti-vivisectionist trying to clothe the nakedness of his cause in such hopelessly worn baggy trousers as those old 'quality of mercy' duds. I approach and, on suitable terms, produce from my stores the one perfect fit, the thing about Cymbeline's vivisectionist queen and her nasty games with the poison—

'Which first, perchance, she'll prove
on cats and dogs,
Then afterward up higher.'

Hey? 'As Shakspeare says,' you know. You see the general line?" I did.

"His pupil age," 'as Shakspeare says,' "man-entered thus," our Coriolanus waxed like a sea in this new line of business. He would equip the sworn foes of the grape with, "'O God, that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains!' as Shakspeare nobly exclaims." To the defence of the hard-bitten dealers in sherry he came the next week with, "'If I had a thousand sons, the first humane principle I would teach them should be to forswear thin potations and addict themselves to sack,' as genial Shakspeare declares." For the vegetarian orator's use there was "Shakspeare's" significant saying, "Methinks sometimes I have no more wit than a Christian or an ordinary man has; but I am a great eater of beef, and I believe that does harm to my wits." But lest the carnivora should be dashed, Colin had also on tap for their defenders "Shakspeare's" derisive dismissal of one member at least, of the faction of cereals and greens, "He a Captain! Hang him, rogue! He lives upon mouldy stewed prunes and dried cakes."

"No party bias, you'll own," Colin said. "Good spurs always in stock for any cock that will fight. I'm like both the lots of armourers 'accomplishing the knights,' all round, before Agincourt. That's Shakspeare too. I'm like Autolycus, selling all makes of ballad: no priggish censoring. Shakspeare again. He really *is* a great fellow; he beats

the authors you buy. I've taken to reading him lately, simply for fun—of course I couldn't afford the time to read him bang through for the business; I had to work with concordances, glossaries, all sorts of gadgets. What would you say to our starting in on theology? Great human interest, you know—men's business and bosoms. The stuff is all there, lying ready: 'Heaven is above all yet; there sits a Judge,' and so on, for the orthodox lot; the unbelieving dogs might have, 'There is no fellow in the firmament,' or——"

"Hullo!" I interrupted. "Heard that before."

"Ah? Apropos of the gum? What of it? Cannot a line be *dégommé*, as well as a general? Shall I not aim at concision? Shall I not crystallise? You think it profane? *Schrecklichkeit*, eh? Ye ken na what's resisted. Out of that firmament line I might, had I not loved the Swan, have twisted a puff for the formamint merchants. Do not curb a desperate man too hard."

Colin had really been reading his author. All the rest of his life he had read as little as might be, and nothing except what he liked. So the whole of his small reading was still in his head and it amused him. Some of the men who read least can quote most, and of these he was one; his funds of that kind might be small, but they were all in hand or at call, unlike the common bookworm's unavailable masses of locked-up capital. Several nights of diverting reading in bed had now convinced Colin that quite a lot of little games with Shakspeare remained to be played, to any agile player's advantage; they needed only the simplest appliances, Colin assured me. "Pen, ink, a little paper and a front of brass. No more. And in the after-time you marvel at the way that you have scored." Here I broke in with a few ribald words. There is, as Solomon hinted, a time for blank verse and a time to refrain from blank-versing.

The first of Colin's new set of games was to pull Shakspeare down in the open, take a play from him and give it to somebody else. "This game," he said, "is called the Higher Criticism. It isn't really new at all. They've played it off on the Bible till you'd suppose there was hardly a page that wasn't made up by some idle solicitor's clerk at Alexandria. Played it on poor Giorgione too, till he has hardly a Jack picture left. Now it is Our Pleasant Willy's turn. You'll see, in the spring publishing season. 'Love's Labour Lost' is the loot that I go for."

"Why it?" I asked.

"Think what good manners," said Colin, "its great people have. And their wit! They all walk about dropping pearls, like Aladdin at court. Of course, as you know, it only just shows that the Bard was as yet a green lad from the Midlands. He fancied that the

great did talk like that. He was like our dear old Henry James when he came unspoilt from the States in his youth—when he hadn't found out that the Mowbrays and Talbots of Albion call everything beastly or else ripping. So down sat the bright youth from Stratford and turned on all his own lustre and wit: hoped he was doing his princes and peers to the life. Then all the common people went to the play and thought that all this rich figured stuff must be just what all the great ones of the earth did really give off when they talked, and that no one but they had the knack. A quaint popular faith! And this faith is mine oyster, which I with my pen am opening. How, I ask in the slim octavo now in the press, could any low actor-fellow, out of the Provinces too, pick up so well the very idiom of the Court? A fugitive poacher; a holder of horses at theatre doors (you know the silly old yarns): how could the lout have had any nice friends? Think how that must appeal to the 'better-class suburbs,' where every one feels in his bones that in all essentials he is an earl changed in the cradle. Won't they be cheered when they read me and see that Shakspeare has got to hand over to one of themselves? To which, do you ask? With a graceful gesture I indicate James, eighth Earl of Pomfret. I looked that fellow up. He really seems to have been quite a brainy, presentable blood in his day—knew the chief people in France, and wrote a book about dogs, and had all the good gifts of nature."

I breathed a misgiving. Somehow I seem to be always cast for the moralist's part when I talk with Colin.

He agreed blithely. "Scrubby? Of course. *Canaillerie? Cabotinage?* That's what I'm trying for. It's what we English need. We've tried the other game. We played the gentleman until we almost died of it. Lowther was much too well-bred to euchre the Kaiser in Turkey. Spring-Rice wouldn't dirty his hands to do Bernstorff down in America. Same story at home. The nimble cads walk over us *paisiblement.* They have all the money, and all the papers except one or two. When the Red Terror comes they'll get all the best seats in the tumbrils. A bounding world, my friend. Bound or perish, that's what it's come to; so good, hearty bounding for me. *Nunc saltandum est, nunc pede libero pulsanda tellus.*"

The book throve; it sold well. The dry-as-dust scholars took pains to prove Colin a dunce. That helped it, by getting it talked of. Light-hearted readers liked seeing the dry-as-dusts' beards so airily pulled. A journal with the greatest circulation in the solar system (certified by chartered accountant) said that, "if not impeccable in point of scholarship," Colin was "stimulating and suggestive." Colin studied

with an intelligent glee the anatomy of his success. He wrote to me, "'Strange job it is,' as my brother in letters, Molière, used to say, 'to amuse worthy people.' Still, I'm in so far in gammon now that I propose to go o'er. Lord, Lord, how subject we young writers are to this vice of quoting! Pardon it; the dyer's hand, you know—— But to my tale. Do you know that, ever since the two Poles were got to, there have been only two first-rate nuts left to be cracked in this world. Everest is one. The other's the Riddle, as some *crétins* say, of the Sonnets."

Oh yes, I had heard of that puzzle at school. What were Shakspeare's "sugared" Sonnets all about, beneath the sugar? Behind their foreground films of obvious meaning, the jealousies and lusts and vapours, what was the veiled import that seemed at times to be just about to break out into clearness, the way a peak does through mists, and then to recede again? What, as University Extension lecturers so love to ask, was the Sonnets' "message to *us*"?

Colin answers the question. Just read his book. It is out and its boom has begun. Colin narrates in burning words (Chapter I.) how the revelation came to himself. Like Buddha's vision of truth, it was nocturnal. Lying in bed, on that last night before the war, and thinking of nothing at all, it seems that he suddenly saw, printed in letters of fire on the black page of night, three lines from Shakspeare's eighty-sixth Sonnet:—

> "Was it the proud full sail of his great verse,
> Bound for the prize of all too precious you,
> That did my ripe thoughts in my brain inhearse?"

Then the vision disappeared for an instant, like one of those changing advertisement sky-signs; then it reappeared with a change in its lettering, thus:—

> "Was it tHe prOud full sail of His grEat verse,
> BouNd for the priZe Of aLL too prEcious you,
> That did my Ripe thoughts in my braiN inhearse?"

Again the fiery sky-sign was turned out, and again it returned, but now all the lamps were extinct except those that had lit the twelve salient letters. Thus:—

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   H  O          H  E
N        Z O  LL    E
      R              N
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Again the switch was turned off, again a second of darkness elapsed, and again the letters of fire returned, now drawn in upon one another, like this:—

HOHENZOLLERN.

"Then I knew," Colin writes, in the spirit of earnest humility dear to so many buyers of books, "that the key so long sought by countless students more learned, more skilled than I, had fallen into my unworthy hands. My heart gave thanks, I leapt from my bed and ran for a text of the Sonnets. Poor George Wyndham's edition lay on my desk. He had

given it me; I was his godson. My mind was on fire. Sonnet after Sonnet was rather devoured than read before the August dawn broke over Kensington Gardens below the windows of my study. And oh, the joy of reassurance! No fiend had tricked me. The flames of those sky-signs of dream were not of the pit. They were apocalyptic. For now the revelation continued. From page after page there shone, before my opened eyes, the same solemn warning from that infinitely prescient mind to our poor purblind age, so soon to go unprepared to the slaughter because it had not understood. At one place it was simply the darkling menace of the name William Hohenzollern, given in full:—

'HoW many lambs mIght the stern woLf betray,
If LIke a lAMb He cOuld His looks translatE!
How maNy gaZers mightst thOu Lead away,
If thou wouLdest usE the stReNgth of all thy state!'

"At another place it seemed as if the saving message had been floating over the face of the poem, as clouds drift across a full moon, and the first two letters had not yet crossed the rim of the bright orb. And so it remains a clipped '—lliam Hohenzollern' for ever in the lines:—

'CLouds and ecLIpses stAin both Moon and sun,
And loatHsOme canker lives in sweetest bud.
All men Have faults, and evEN I in this,
AuthoriZing thy trespass with cOmpare,
MyseLf corrupting, saLving thy amiss,
Excusing thy sins moRe than thy siNs are.'

"And then, again, the poet-prophet's warning call to his deluded countrymen would rise almost into a scream of 'Ware Hohenzollerns!' in the sombre passage:—

'WeARy with toil, I haste me to my bEd,
For then my tHOughts, from far wHere I abide,
IntENd a ZealOus piLgrimage to thee,
And keep my drooping eyeLids opEn wide,
Looking on daRkNesS.'

"Or else a yet more explicit finger would point to our particular peril in the 'Ware Will Hohenzollern' of the passage, hitherto so little understood by the critics:—

'A WomAn's face with natuRE's oWn hand painted.
A man In hue, aLL "hues" in His cOntrolling,
WhicH steals mEN's eyes and women's souls amaZeth,
And fOr a woman wert thou first created;
TiLL naturE, as she wRought thee, fell a-dotiNg.'

"'Will?' 'Will?' Why, here, of course, was the simple clue to those enigmatic lines that had set the centuries scratching their heads:—

'Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy "Will,"
And "Will" to boot, and "Will" in overplus.'

"What more natural way, when you come to read it with fuller knowledge, of telling our world how much more than

enough it would have of the Kaiser? That is always the way with an intricate puzzle. Once find the key and every particle of the conundrum seems suddenly to rush together into luminous unity. No obscurity now about a line that was once considered so knotty as—

'Think all but one, and me in that one "Will."'

"Could Shakspeare give a plainer hint to the searcher for his inner meaning? 'Stick to it,' as we vulgar moderns would say; 'one key opens all, and "Will" is the key; find who "Will" is and you'll find what I'm at.'

"Last scene of all, as our great author says, that ended this epic of discovery, this tragedy of a British Cassandra not understood or regarded in time, was the disappearance of the ultimate mystery of the famous dedication, 'To the onlie begetter of these insuing sonnets, Mr W. H.,' with its obviously ironical good wishes for such immortality as the William Hohenzollern of the 'insuing sonnets' was likely to get when once their riddle was read. What grotesque guesses the fumbling moles of literary biography and criticism have made at the man indicated by that 'W. H.'—William Herbert, William Hall, Willie Hughes, William Himself! How vainly, as Plato has said, do men hunt far and wide for the truth that was tumbling about on the ground at their feet when they started! One ray of understanding and no mystery remained. The 'Riddle of the Sonnets' was thenceforth an insubstantial pageant faded, leaving, as our poet puts it, 'not a wrack behind.'"

Now don't go away with the notion that Colin's talent was just flimsy. A man who will take pains to ape in this elaborate way the pursy earnestness of the prosperous dealer in cheap culture cannot be a mere butterfly. Very taking smears of pathos, too, he knew how to dab on. Look at his "Foreword." There he wistfully tells how he had longed to push on with the book in 1914, when the vision was new; how the stern voice of duty had called him away from the chaste nunnery of study; how like a homing dove he had flown fondly back to his desk the moment the other dove, the peace one, arrived at the seat of war; how well he knew now the tender emotion of Claudio:—

"When we went onward on this ended action,
I look'd upon her with a soldier's eye,
That liked, but had a rougher task in hand,
Than to drive liking to the name of love:
But now I am return'd and that war-thoughts
Have left their places vacant, in their rooms
Come thronging soft and delicate desires,
All prompting me how fair young Hero is,
Saying, I liked her ere I went to wars."

It all helped. So did Colin's brilliant idea of writing, un-

signed, a furious attack on the book, in a popular Sunday paper; [the book was profoundly unwholesome, he argued; it pandered to a morbid and sensational spiritualism only too rife in our neurotic age. This sent many to it. So, again, did Colin's great defence of himself the Sunday after—full of emotion, manly emotion. He had, take it for all in all, an excellent press. Even some critics who really knew better flirted skittishly with Colin's engaging chimera. "Almost persuadest thou me," one of them said, without a broad grin, "to be a cryptogrammarian."

I asked him how ever he came to start such a stag of a hare.

He laughed. "Hare? *Le mot juste!* A hare did it—a very March hare, clothed all in motley—a living Baconian—one of the beauties who tell you that Bacon wrote Shakspeare's *théâtre complet* in his evenings. He came to my shop—to the controversial department, the one where we fit Davids out with smooth stones from the brook—the ballistics counter we call it. He wanted something to sling at the people who think the Swan laid its own eggs. It was the worst twister we'd had. It beat Willan himself. Before giving up I just opened the Bard at a venture, the way people used to dip into a Bible for luck when things stumped them. Blowed if the first thing I saw wasn't Falstaff yelling out, 'On, bacons, on!' to buck up the robbers. Nae shauchlin' testimony here, thought I, and I sold it over the counter to that distraught person. Then I reflected—if you can get out of Shakspeare a jemmy to help you to burgle his own house, what can't you get out of him? That heartened me up. So I got down to work there and then, hunting for Z's in the Sonnets. Hohenzed-ollern. You see, it was only the Z's that gave any trouble at all."

AN UNKNOWN FRONTIER.

BY LIEUT.-COLONEL E. P. LE BRETON, R.E.

I.

In the far north-east of India—beyond the green and sodden gardens of Assam, beyond Tinsukia, beyond the Miris and the Abors—lies the little country of the Mishmis. A land of inhospitable mountains and dense forests, of impassable torrents, of avalanches of stone and mud, of fever and dysentery, of every biting bug and stinging fly known to man, no stranger who has once been there will willingly return.

To the south stretch the vast impenetrable forests where Assam merges indefinitely into Burma; to the east rise the unknown ranges of Hkamptilong. On the north the frontier marches with that debateable land which the Chinese call the Province of Zayul, and the Thibetans claim as Eastern Thibet. Then the frontier passes through untrodden hills till it meets the territory of the Abors, and descends again to the plains, touching the north-east corner of Assam at the little frontier post of Sadya.

Three small tribes make up the Mishmi nation—the Mijus, the Digarus, and the Chulakattas—but their habits and their characteristics differ little. Small and hairless, inexpressibly dirty, smokers of opium, the heirs of every vice known to men or to monkeys, they are not a pleasant people.

Nothing of value grows in Mishmi land: a few bananas, a few scanty acres of millet and opium poppy, no green vegetables, no cattle save a few half-wild Mithun, and the noisome swine of the East. And yet a few years ago the British Raj had occasion to occupy this deplorable country and assert its overlordship of the Mishmi tribes.

One of the dreams of British rule in India is the eventual linking up by rail of Burma and Hindustan, and this rail would most easily pass through the north-east of Assam. But the Government which builds the line must be certain of the Mishmi tracts.

At the time of this little expedition there was still an Emperor in Pekin, and that great yellow cauldron which is China, instead of erupting at its centre, was bubbling over on its farthest frontier. In the west of Szechuan there had arisen a very great general, one Chao-er-Feng, a man who, had he lived, would probably have carved out one of those central Asian kingdoms which have always sprung up in the days of China's weakness, and vanished again with her returning strength.

Chao-er-Feng had raised an army which adored him: he defeated the Thibetans; he

defeated the mysterious Pomeds, that race which no European has ever seen, but which all the legends of the mongoloid nations declare to be white; and he held Zayul with a strong hand.

But not content with that, he had invaded Mishmiland, had given salt and parwanas to the headman, had asserted Chinese overlordship, and come down as far as the Del-li river, some sixty miles from Sadya. Then as the snow began to fall on the hills he withdrew again to his province of Zayul.

Now it is all but impossible to support a permanent garrison in the Mishmi country. There are no roads, the passes through which the Chinese came are impassable in winter, while access from India is closed all the summer by the flooding of the jungle tracts and the rising of the many torrents in the hills—torrents which are easily negotiated in the winter, but which from April to November present gorges, two hundred to four hundred feet wide and filled with a foaming flood, to the would-be builder of bridges.

And so it happened that even while Chao-er-Feng was withdrawing over the first snow on the passes, a little force of Indian troops was assembling at Sadya to undo his work.

Very little was known by us of the Mishmi country at that time. In the previous three or four years two British officers had scurried through the country and escaped with their lives. From their reports it was known that there were no roads, and that the country was indescribably difficult and inhospitable. A map had even been prepared, which gave accurately enough the course of the Lohit Brahmapootra, the last great branch of that stately river, which traverses the Mishmi country from end to end, but is not navigable until it leaves the hills and enters Assam. Nowhere was it more than twenty miles wrong; but the map did not stop there. On each side we were shown an elaborate mountain system which did equal credit to the draughtsmanship and the imagination of the survey of India, while the country bristled with place-names, many of which were unrecognisable by the inhabitants, and not a few had no corporeal existence at all.

No one knew if the Chinese had garrisoned the country or not; no one knew if the Mishmi would greet us with open arms or with avalanches of stones and flights of poisoned arrows.

So the force was told to occupy the country, to penetrate some 190 miles to the last land held by Mishmis, to remove any Chinese they might encounter, and to return before the rivers rose in the spring, or they would starve, as no food could reach them after that.

At the best, the larger part of the journey would be over precipitous and dangerous hillsides. The baggage and sup-

plies would have to be carried by coolies. Nothing but the smallest of forces could hope to cover the distance in the time available.

And the little army which cheerfully cut its way into the unknown to do all this numbered barely 400 fighting men, followed by 1000 Naga coolies, who formed the only transport for the last 120 miles of the advance, and who could at a pinch use their spears against an ill-armed enemy.

Small though it was, the composition of the Mishmi Mission Force left little to be desired. It was composed of the 5th Field Company of the 1st King George's Own Sappers and Miners, 200 stalwart yeomen of the Punjab, and about the same number of Gurkha riflemen from the Naga Hills battalion of the Assam Military Police. It was accompanied by a survey party, and completed by the 1000 Naga coolies whom I have already mentioned.

There is no need to expatiate on the military qualities of the Punjabi Mussulman, the Sikh, or the Gurkha; while no Englishman who has dealt with Nagas can ever forget the attraction of those happy, smiling, gallant little savages.

II.

The force began to assemble at Sadya towards the end of October, and the sappers moved out at once to build a bullock-cart bridge over the Kundil river, which is there some three hundred feet wide.

The route was eventually to follow the course of the Lohit Brahmapootra, but as all reports agreed that the gorge through which that river gains the plains was impracticable, it was decided to make for the mouth of its tributary, the Temei, and cut a way from there into the valley of the main stream. The mouth of the Temei was dignified by the name of Temeimukh on the map, but by the time we reached it we had long given up expecting a name on the map to represent a village on the ground. The way there led through marshy flat forest, with a considerable stream to be crossed every three miles or so.

The jungle was the enchanted forest of one's childhood—a maze of trees sixty, seventy, a hundred feet high. Between them creepers of every sort twined and twisted, forming above a solid roof of green. Thorny palms and bushes grew everywhere. It was barely possible to move without cutting a path.

The climate in November was like a Turkish bath. We were never dry. Leeches lay in waiting behind every leaf, and our thin clothes were no obstacle to them. Mosquitoes

swarmed and brought plentiful fever in their train; Djim Djama flies, unnoticed till they had vanished, left blood blisters on our hands. Trails of a beautiful spiræa-like flower hung down on a level with our heads, but those who touched it found it a nettle of the most vicious sort, capable of producing a rash which banished sleep for nights.

One of the sappers, when armed only with a billhook, met a tiger at a range of about forty yards; a subaltern [1] and a wild elephant moving down the road in different directions by night nearly ran into each other. In both cases the quadruped fled first, but only because the wild animal is a quicker mover than the civilised one.

There were few birds below the creeper roof, but an infinity of moths and butterflies. Great purple moths, with peacock eyes of electric blue, floated through the trees. Leaf-butterflies settled on branches, closed their wings, and vanished. Little blues, with tails of feathery tassels, and fidgety little yellow and red insects fluttered close above the ground. And over everything there hung an all-pervading smell as of decayed cabbage.

Through this foul and venomous jungle the sappers cut their cart-road. The direction had usually to be left to guesswork: the average pace, including bridges, was barely two miles a day.

The roof of creepers hung some forty feet above the ground, but the tops of many of the trees must have towered high above it. Nothing could have looked more harmless, but it concealed an altogether unexpected danger. On the skyward side it supported a mass of débris from the highest branches of the great trees—débris ranging from dead leaves and twigs to considerable branches. As the trees came crashing down before the saws and axes of the sappers, they tore through these creepers, which cast their burden on to the heads of the unsuspecting workers below, severely injuring two or three men, and thoroughly frightening the rest of us. After the first accident the tree-fellers kept a wary eye on this treacherous ceiling, but the danger could never be entirely eliminated.

While the sappers were employed in this way, convoys of dug-outs were plying up the Lohit laden with rice and atta. Temeimukh was located, and a post was built there, while an intermediate post was made at the mouth of another tributary, the Dening.

Stores of provisions were accumulating at both these places, and now and then convoys of Nagas passed us, cutting for themselves a narrow path after they had passed the

[1] That very gallant soldier and sportsman, the late Captain J. F. Gray, M.C., R.E., 1st K.G.O. Sappers and Miners, killed in Palestine in June 1918.

roadhead. Towards the end of November the whole force assembled at Temeimukh, and a system of bullock-cart convoys was working steadily over the fifty odd miles of the new road between Temei and Sadya.

Every one was relieved at leaving the fetid atmosphere of the forest. One of the sapper subalterns was even found, in the lightness of his heart, attempting to capture live bait in a pool with his mosquito-net. Some good Mahseer were caught by the political officer, but the sappers were too busy to do more than occasionally add to the food supply by the judicious dynamiting of a likely backwater.

In front of us lay the thickly-wooded hills, over which we were to make our way into the valley of the Lohit and the Mishmi country proper. These hills stand sheer 6000 feet above the plain, and the view from them covers an expanse of almost unbroken forest stretching to the horizon. They are very steep, while concealed in the wood one comes suddenly and frequently on sheer precipices of stone.

The alignment of a track for pack-mules was a heart-rending task, but though the officer commanding the sappers will never divulge the steepest grade he used, it was finished in time to release many coolies for the further advance by substituting the sapper equipment mules for the convoy work of that section.

Meanwhile the headquarters and the rest of the force pushed forward with all the coolies, building stockaded supply-posts every twelve or fourteen miles, filling them from the post at Temei, and leaving a small garrison in each.

By the 19th of December they had got to the Del-li river, and orders were sent back for half the sapper company to march and join the force there for the final advance, while half remained to complete the mule road.

The mule road was now on the top of the dividing hills, and had still to be brought down again to the Tedding river, which flows into the Lohit above the gorge of Brahmakund, through which it gains the plains.

Starting from our camp at Hareling we reached the Tedding that night, and on the 21st we rejoined the headquarters in their stockaded fort on the Del-li.

III.

Of the many tributaries we crossed in our march through the Mishmi country, three were of the first importance—the Del-li, the Du, and the Hal-le, and of these the Del-li is the largest.

These three rivers are never fordable. In the winter they can be crossed by weird bamboo

bridges made by the Mishmi, or by the more solid trestle of the sappers; but the summer floods sweep away anything of this sort, and replace a clear stream, wandering through a stony bed vastly too big for it, by an angry impassable torrent stretching from shore to shore.

Once these streams have risen with the melting of the snow, there is no way of passing them for troops or food.

The Mishmis themselves cross by "rope" bridges, which are, I believe, peculiar to these tracts. They vary in the rope and the number of strands used, but in Southern Mishmi-land they are usually made of four or five canes stretched side by side across the gorges, usually fifty to a hundred feet above the water, and varying from one hundred to four hundred feet in span. These canes are found in many places in the jungle, twisting and writhing over the hillsides like endless tangled ropes. They average perhaps one and a half inches in diameter, and are marvellously strong. The four or five strands of this cane which compose a rope bridge are, of course, quite impassable for any being less simian than the architect.

The Mishmi, however, finds them far easier to negotiate than he would the quietest London thoroughfare. Supporting the small of his back in a ring of cane, which also encircles the rope, and inserting the nape of his neck in a similar but smaller ring, he grasps the ropes with his hands, locks his feet above them, and pulls himself across, looking like a toy monkey on a stick held horizontally with the monkey underneath.

The advance from the Del-li started on the 21st December. The road was nowhere passable for loaded coolies without improvement. Boulders had to be demolished, or wooden ladders made over them; standing trees had to be felled; trees fallen across the path had to be cut or thrown down the hill; precipices had to have zigzags or steps cut up them.

Now and then the Mishmis would block up the main road and send us down false trails ending in impossible precipices; now and then we passed one of their quaint terrace villages, with its scanty crops of poppy or millet. The villages are curious. They consist of two or three huts each 10 or 15 feet wide, and 100, 200, even 300 yards long. These are divided up amongst the slaves and the families of the village, but as a rule there are only two or three entrances for the whole building.

The huts are made in the frailest way of grass and bamboo and banana leaves, and stand some six or seven feet above the ground. The space between the ground and the floor of the hut is railed in and used as a stable for pigs, mithun, and fowls, but principally for pigs. The floors are

made of bamboo with many gaps between them, and refuse from the living-rooms is simply and economically disposed of by dropping it through the floor to the pigs below.

The march was very slow and very monotonous. Each evening the sappers would make the track passable for a mile or so beyond camp. Each morning at dawn they would start out down this track, and start work where they had stopped at nightfall the day before. Later on the long column of laden coolies would catch them up, and wait an hour or so till in the afternoon a place was found for a camp and the track made up to it. Then the sappers would start on ahead while the coolies cleared and cut a place for camp. Some days we made five miles, some days seven, and every two marches a little stockaded post was set up, a little garrison was placed in it, a few coolies were left to carry stores daily from the half-way halt in rear and to the half-way halt in front; and as we went on the post started filling up with food from our chain of posts stretching down to Sadya.

And so day by day we slowly advanced to the Chinese frontier.

The work was unceasing and monotonous. Sick men, and men hurt by the not infrequent accidents inseparable from an advance in that country, had to be half carried, half pulled, to the nearest post and left there. Every week or so an assistant surgeon travelled up the line and had a look at them. On Christmas Eve we marched six miles, and camped at a little clearing called Ti-la. The sappers as usual went on to improve the road in front, and came back at nightfall clamouring for vengeance.

The track here was better than usual, and led through a village, the existence of which was of course unknown to us. About a mile above the village the Mishmis had blocked it up, concealed the entrance, and prepared a track leading down the hill. The sappers fell into the trap, plunged down the false track, and after a couple of hours' work were brought up by a sheer precipice falling into a tributary of the Lohit.

Leaving their sections working on this unprofitable path, two of the sapper officers, one British and one Indian, scrambled up the tributary to prospect for a better way. They only meant to go a few hundred yards, but the necessity of seeing round just one more corner lured them on; and when finally they came on a well-marked track running up the hill, they were far out of sight and hearing of the men.

Now there are two laws of the Medes and Persians for those employed on our trans-frontier expeditions. One is that no body of troops shall be left out at night, except the garrisons of sangars built to protect the outposts of the

main body. The other is that no officer shall go out of reach of his men without an armed escort.

But, for the Mishmi mission, the importance of avoiding delay seemed paramount. If the two sappers went back the force would almost certainly lose a day searching for the track. If they went on they might find the right path. On the other hand, they were only armed with native daos, and the Mishmis were by no means friendly; while if the Mishmis let them alone they ran more than a sporting chance of losing their way and spending a night in the hills, a thing which they shrewdly suspected would entail a most unpleasant interview with the O. C. Force on their return. There was only an hour or so of daylight left, so they went on up the hill at top speed. After climbing some six or seven hundred feet they rounded a grassy knoll, and found themselves abruptly in a village. Panting, sweating, tired, and cross, those two marched up to the nearest hut and clamoured for the Gaom Bura.

The Mishmis, guiltily conscious of having obstructed the path, and not quite certain how many other invaders might be in the neighbourhood, quailed before a torrent of oaths in English, Punjabi, and Hindustani. The Gaom Bura was produced. With much gesticulation and a few words of Assamese he was made to understand what was wanted. He provided a couple of guides, the path was found, the company collected, and camp reached by nightfall.

On Christmas Day the force marched five and a half miles, and built a post at Gnagor. That night the two messes dined together, faring sumptuously on the contents of many tins, and one or two carefully-hoarded bottles containing neither rum nor commissariat lime-juice.

No one who has not passed a few months in a country where green vegetables of any sort are unobtainable can realise the self-restraint needed in helping oneself to tinned Brussels sprouts under the hungry eyes of those whose turn is yet to come. After dinner we pulled out our equipment boxes and sat by a smoky fire, while on the other side our little naked Nagas sang us their plaintive musical ballads.

It was a curious scene: a little ledge on the side of a precipitous hill, on it a litter of leaf and stick and waterproof-sheet shelters, a crowd of sepoys cooking, eating, or sleeping, a little new stockaded post, and in the centre a tent or two, a flickering fire, a little group of six dishevelled, bearded British officers, and the mass of Nagas, each man with his spear and dao; in front of them the four chosen singers, huddled together, their arms round each other's necks, sang their curiously sweet harmonies.

The third march found us at Min Zang. Here the river takes a great bend, and in the angle is a large flat space very grateful among the hills. The Lohit here had then a width of about two hundred feet of foaming torrent; in the summer it must be nearer five hundred. High above the river sways a Mishmi bridge made of a single rope of plaited bamboo skin, some five inches in circumference. This was quite impassable to any one but a Mishmi, but the sappers devised a carrier hanging from a wooden roller. It was not a comfortable or very safe conveyance, but it served to send a survey party with an escort to explore the farther side.

Three days we spent at Min Zang building a post, making the track, and accumulating supplies, and on the first day of the new year we started on the last stage of our advance.

IV.

Beyond Min Zang the country changes abruptly. The close-tumbled, jungle-clad hills give way to bare rounded slopes and naked precipices. Trees are rare: a few pines, and an occasional patch of bananas.

The prevailing winds sweep up the valley. The pine-trees, torn and moulded by their force, bend up-stream, and throw their ragged limbs towards China. The Mishmi consider this an evidence of the very powerful magic of the Chinese. How, they asked, can the English hope to rule this land from Sadya when even the very trees are made to point to Rima.

The hills and precipices here are interspersed with the very curious formations which travellers have called "flats." Every few miles there projects from the precipitous hillside a shelf of level ground, ground level as a tennis-lawn, covered with coarse grass and with an occasional boulder on it. These flats have as a rule a sheer cliff running up from their inner edge, and an equally sheer precipice dropping from their outer edge. They are probably the result of some curious glacial action. They make Heaven-sent camping-grounds.

On the 4th of January we knew we were close to our goal, and we started out in high spirits from our camp of Man Glo. After two miles our track dropped to the river-bed, and rounding a corner we saw, on the top of a cliff some fifty feet above us, the dragon flag of China.

A little path ran sideways up the cliff, and when we had scrambled to the top we found ourselves on the flat of Menil-Krai. On the left of the path flapped the red flag with its five-toed dragon; on the

right was a wooden post, down which in black Chinese letters on a scarlet ground there ran the inscription:—

THIS IS THE SOUTHERN LIMIT OF THE EMPIRE OF THE GREAT PURE DYNASTY.

Somewhere about the year 1827 two missionary priests penetrated to Menil-Krai from India. They wrote that on the Great Black Rock on Menil-Krai flat they had made a little cairn in which they had left a paper annexing Mishmi-land on behalf of John Company and King George the IV. They went on and were killed. Their cairn has left no trace, but opposite us, not three-quarters of a mile from the flag and notice of Chao-er-Feng, stood the Great Black Rock of Menil-Krai.

The force moved on and halted round the rock, while a reconnaissance was made ahead. Nothing is sacred to a sapper, and the boundary pillar and flag of the Celestial Empire had a narrow escape from adorning the walls of a distant R.E. Mess. The O.C. Force preserved them from this indignity, and when we withdrew they were still ineffectually guarding Menil-Krai, though they were even then noticeably the worse for wear. And the Great Pure Dynasty itself had already been driven from Pekin.

A mile or so on the Chinese side of these boundary marks we made our camp on the banks of the Yepuk river. This was to be the limit of our advance, the new frontier of British India. Behind us lay the Chinese boundary pillar and the Mishmi tribes; in front the Thibetans and Chao-er-Feng's army of occupation. Here we were to stay as long as the safety of our communications should allow us, while by our works and our negotiations we impressed the Mishmis and the Chinese with the permanency of the new order of things.

It was a noble bluff. The difficulties of supply and the need for protecting our long line of communications had reduced the force to microscopic proportions. For a month we sat in territory claimed by the Chinese, a guard on the ford and a Union Jack flaunting itself before the Political Officer's tent, with a hundred miles of hilly track and swampy road between us and any possible support, and with a total force of one hundred and ten rifles. Of these, eighty were sappers, and thirty were Gurkhas of the Naga Hills Battalion.

The next day the sappers started blasting and cutting a graded six-foot road towards Sadya.

There were two political objects in this. Firstly, what greater proof of a fixed intention to return could we offer than an unfinished graded road? —a road made in toil and danger by blasting through rock, and skirting round precipitous hillsides with long and ponderous

retaining walls; and secondly, when the Chinese at Rima should send down to talk with us in the gate we could very conveniently mention that the greater part of our force happened to be just out of sight making the road to India.

The month at Yepuk river camp passed with little incident.

When we had been there a week or so the Embassy we had expected from Rima arrived on the Yepuk river, and asked for an interview. This Embassy was headed by a bright attractive-looking little Chinese officer, who saluted each of us with the curious half-curtsey of his army. Next to him was a feudal chief, the head of a "barbarian" tribe of Szechuan tributary to the Chinese Empire. He saluted by shaking hands with himself in the manner familiar to us all from the many musical comedies of the Mikado type. The third member of the remarkable trio was a wild Thibetan servant, who showed his respect by opening a wide mouth and exposing a tongue of massive proportion to the individual he wished to honour.

The two senior representatives were conducted to the headquarter mess, and the *crême de menthe* provided by a thoughtful Government for political presents, produced. Then we all sat round the camp table while our talented interpreter initiated the conversation, translating it sentence by sentence for our benefit.

Truth compels me to admit that the conversation was dull in the extreme. I can at this moment remember only one scrap of dialogue, and that more of a complimentary than a diplomatic nature:—

Interpreter: "And how many little nobles are there in your Palace?"

Chinese Representative: "The old bitch has three dog pups,"—which I understood to refer to the family of the senior Chinese envoy.

We knew, and the Embassy did not know, that the Empire had fallen, and that Chao-er-Feng had been assassinated in Szechuan. We did not tell them, and when, after exchanging gifts and compliments, they returned to Rima, we flattered ourselves that they had learnt nothing of our strength or our intentions. I wonder! The Chinese are a subtle and intellectual race. There are few documents I should like to see more than the report of that smooth-faced little Chinese officer.

We stayed on the banks of the Yepuk for a month.

And while we worked there the rivers rose behind us, our communications became more insecure, our rations smaller, as bridge after bridge was swept away, holding up all transport during its replacement.

At the end of January, Simla came to the conclusion that we had done the work we were sent for, and we were told to return.

We had run it fine. Another

week or two and we should have been faced with the alternative of starving in Mishmi-land or throwing ourselves on the mercy of the Chinese—there would have been no return to civilisation for seven months.

On our homeward way we met and courteously turned back three inquisitive Russian officers, who had with great speed and some cunning made a dart from Pondicherry and followed up our tracks. The wires were hot with telegrams from Simla ordering all and sundry to stop them, but they had got well away from telegraph stations before the G. of I. heard of them.

Our return journey was uneventful. The records of it, and of the warrant eaten by mice in the Dibru-Sadya Railway Company's office, of the mad dog at Saikhwa Ghat, and the raft that sank with all on board at Sadya, are not they buried in the files at Simla?

The British ranks were told that the gods were pleased with them, but that for political reasons no rewards or commendations would be published. Certain well-earned Orders of British India and Distinguished Conduct Medals were bestowed on the Indian ranks without any reason being stated in the 'Gazette' notifying them.

And so we separated, each to his own cantonment, while the Mishmis, still sucking their eternal opium pipes, settled back into their immemorial dirt with grunts of heartfelt relief.

THE BLUENOSE SKIPPERS.

BY ARTHUR HUNT CHUTE.

"Our bark's a bluenose clipper,
And our skipper's bluenose too;
Our cook's a bluenose nigger,
And we're most a bluenose crew.
Heave hearty on the chorus there,
As lusty as ye can,
For we're outward bound this morning
On a Nova Scotia man."

NOVA SCOTIA is pre-eminently the seafaring country of the Western world. What England is to Europe, Nova Scotia is to the continent of North America — on account of its geographical position, and still more on account of the maritime propensities of its people.

But for a little finger joining it to the mainland the peninsula is entirely surrounded by sea. Travelling on the railroad one may for a short time pass out of sight of the ocean. But it cannot be forgotten. As the train rushes on through field and forest, suddenly there is a break in the horizon hills, and the sea bursts into view. It is a delightful contrast, that gives at one moment the inland farm, and at the next the Atlantic comber breaking its spray in the morning sun.

In the Bay of Fundy the giant tides, rising and falling sixty feet, come not merely to the iron coast, but sweeping by Cape Blomidon they bring the wide Atlantic to the Grand Pré meadows and Maitland marshes.

Kipling, in his 'Captains Courageous,' tells of a Nova Scotia *man* driving by in the night "full of Gin and Judique men." The Judique Fleet on the Banks is all that remains of our age of romance. We still send a hundred sail or more to the fisheries, but the greater glory is departed. Beyond the Gaelic Fleet we search in vain for that breed of hard-fisted mystics, iron men in wooden ships, seafarers in the clipper-ship era, whose unrecorded story is one of the finest pages in the lost Iliads of the sea,—

"Lord of the bunt and gasket, and master of the yard,
To whom no land was distant, to whom no sea was barred."

In the clipper-ship era Nova Scotia reached her zenith, attaining to the place of fourth maritime country in the world. Then every town and hamlet along her seaboard was dotted with shipyards, and on every tide the Bluenose sons came sailing back from the farthest quarters of the globe.

Shipbuilding was indigenous

to the soil of the Bluenose country. They, the New Englanders and the Scandinavians, were the only people who could farm, cut timber, build a ship, load her with their own produce, and sail her to the ends of the seven seas. Those were wonderful days for Nova Scotia, when in answering the call of the sea her sons followed their true vocation. At the same time that Donald MacKay, by his incomparable clippers, was adding lustre to his birthplace, Samuel Cunard, a native of Halifax, was sending out from his home city the first of the Transatlantic packets, whose house-flag in later day was destined to lead the world. Everywhere there was the presage of a glorious future. Joseph Howe, Canada's orator of that heroic age, said, "I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, and my hair may be white with age before this prophecy is realised, but I tell you the day will come when Nova Scotia, small as she is, will maintain half a million men upon the sea."

This irresistible turning of the sea-dogs to the ocean is illustrated in a tale my grandfather was wont to tell. Away back on the South Mountain in Nova Scotia was an old farmer named Schofield. He had six sons, and all of them went to sea. These boys grew up on their inland farm, far from the sight or the sound of the ocean. Before them stretched out the Gaspereau and Cornwallis Valleys, fragrant with sixty miles of apple blossoms in the spring-time, crimson and gold in the autumn. Across their farthest skyline the grim North Mountain raised an impenetrable barrier between their sheltered agricultural pursuits and the blue of a maritime world. Not one of these six sons ever saw the sea till he grew up. But as soon as each lad came to responsible years, he shouldered his pack and left for the nearest port in search of a ship.

My grandfather, who was the clergyman in that vast parish between the mountains, came one day to the Schofield home to find the old man alone and in tears. His last son, Orlando, a boy of sixteen, had departed that morning for Hansport to join a ship just launched there from "North's shipyard."

"I don't know why they all should have gone," he complained. "None of them ever saw the sea, and they never got no love of it from me."

"That is why they went to sea," said my grandfather; and he pointed to a picture of a great clipper ship, with her studding-sails and sky-sails, cleaving the sea in a glory of whitening foam.

As a ship was being built in one of the Nova Scotian shipyards the small boys of the village were for ever clambering over her frame. Every young dare-devil wanted to climb aloft and place his cap

on the topmast ball. Thus long before they went to sea they came to know a ship in all her parts, from stem to stern, from keel to truck.

When a new ship sailed on her maiden voyage one of these small boys generally managed to go with her. And before many years the same small boy, grown into manhood, would be standing in the place of the master.

The Nova Scotian captains represented in a rare degree the ideal union of strength and intelligence. In their bodies was the iron of a pioneer stock, while their minds were sedulously cultivated. This cultivation of the mind was the key to their rapid promotion. No seamen ever got their master's papers earlier than they. Most foremast hands were content to spend their days in the forecastle, but the Nova Scotian apprentice boy, like his New England cousin, was bound to be master. Even when he dwelt in the scuppers he had his eye on the captain's cabin.

In the village of Grand Pré, just off Minas Basin, there were at one time twenty able-bodied seamen attending the village school, sitting side by side with the village children. These young seamen had come ashore for the winter, and under the teacher, Mr Somerville, they were engaged in wrestling with 'Bodwitch's Seamanship' and the 'Royal Readers.' This village school in Grand Pré was typical of many others.

One morning at Shelburn, a south-shore port of Nova Scotia, a waggon laden with potatoes came rattling down to the water front. On a wharf the waggon stopped with a jolt, and a lad, who was sleeping on the piled-up load, awakened with a start.

The little chap sat up and rubbed his sleepy eyes, then suddenly was all intent, for there, at the wharf-head, lay one of those fine creations of the Nova Scotian mind, a Banks fishing schooner. The eyes that a moment before were closed in sleep now danced with delight, for he had just been dreaming about ships. The lad who was dreaming thus on that load of potatoes was Donald MacKay, and the world has since marvelled at the realisation of his dreams.

In the Louvre in Paris is the bust of Donald MacKay, one of the greatest ship designers of all time. He was born and bred in Nova Scotia, and he built ships in Boston. Thus Bluenose and Yankee alike may rejoice in his triumph.

A Bluenose skipper, Captain Lachlan MacKay, in a Yankee ship, built by his brother, Donald MacKay, sailed from New York to San Francisco in a hundred and three days. On the second night out, when "all hands" was called by the mate before a sudden rising gale, the "gents" below did not see fit to answer. The mate would have been master

but for the knife of a vicious Cockney. Then Captain Lachlan MacKay took charge in good old Bluenose style. He had sailed from New York in the month of August, the poorest season for a run south, but he crossed the Equator in twenty-five days. Forty-eight days out he rounded the Horn. In those awful latitudes his fore and main topmast and foreyard carried away. But still holding the *Sovereign of the Seas* on her course, he re-rigged her in fourteen days, without putting into Valparaiso, and a hundred and three days out he sailed through the Golden Gate.

In Sheet Harbour, on the Atlantic shore of Nova Scotia, I was seated one afternoon in the village hotel, when Captain Sprott Balcom, the hero of Kipling's story, "'Twixt the Devil and the Deep Sea," strolled into the room. With a figure as hard and thick-set as a keg of nails, and a mahogany-coloured face, Captain Sprott Balcom remains my ideal Bluenose skipper, a living picture from the past. In the early days he used to smuggle rum from Barbados, to the south-shore ports, and always sailed in the fastest brig, so as to beat the Revenue cutter.

Blockade-running during the American Civil War engaged a host of Nova Scotians, offering to them the attraction of vast profits coupled with adventure. The best known of all the Bluenose blockade-runners was Captain John Taylor Wood, who, after his retirement, lived for many years in the city of Halifax.

As a small boy it was my privilege to listen while he told of hair-breadth escapes when time after time he eluded the Federal cruisers.

One famous exploit of his has become a Nova Scotian classic, the tale of how he took the *Tallahassee* out to sea. In the year 1864 the *Tallahassee*, under the command of Captain John Taylor Wood, then one of the most notorious of all the blockade-runners, was chased into Halifax Harbour by two Federal cruisers. According to international law she could only remain in port for a period of twenty-four hours. At the expiration of that time she must put to sea again. During the day she lay in the stream, taking in coal and provisions.

Off the mouth of the harbour the two Federal cruisers steamed back and forth, awaiting their quarry. Captain Wood was not seen ashore during the day, and those who would give commiseration sought for him in vain. The onlooker gazing at the *Tallahassee* riding helpless at her anchor, exclaimed, "The jig's up." But there was no such feeling of helplessness aboard the blockade-runner.

At the bar of the Rialto on Water Street, then the most famous crimp-house of the city, Pilot Jock Fleming stood up and stoutly averred that the

Tallahassee would get to sea that night.

"But it can't be done," protested Burney Upgate, a boarding-house runner; "the harbour mouth's too narrow."

"There's no such thing as 'can't be done' aboard that ship," answered Jock Fleming.

After dark Pilot Jock Fleming boarded the *Tallahassee*, and shortly before flood-tide she weighed anchor, and under her auxiliary steam sailed down the harbour. Those who saw her vanish into the night with her smothered lights shook their heads, never dreaming that Captain Wood would attempt to put to sea except by the regular channel.

In the midst of Halifax Harbour are a number of islands. Between these islands and the Dartmouth shore is a narrow strip of water known as the Eastern Passage. Rowboats and fishing-shallops passed through there safely. But it was incredible to attempt it with a craft of any size.

Toward this Eastern Passage Captain Wood steered the *Tallahassee*. As soon as he was in the shallow water he proceeded dead slow, feeling his way fathom by fathom with sounding-lead. Once the ship grounded. But the tide rose ever so little, and she stirred and moved. Often during that ticklish passage there was scarce room beneath the *Tallahassee's* keel for a man to place his hand. But with infinite patience Captain John Taylor Wood nursed her on, and out, until at last he made the open sea, far from where the Yankees awaited him.

Morning found the two cruisers still on guard. When the hours of grace had passed they sent a cutter up to warn the harbour-master that the blockade-runner must not be given further asylum. By that time the *Tallahassee* was lifting a saucy forefoot to the cresting seas many leagues from Halifax.

Man-driving was supposed to be a specialty with Bluenose skippers. Their name was synonymous with hard treatment of crews, "for neither law of God nor man runs north of fifty-three." A Nova Scotia *man* was invariably looked upon as a hell-packet, where "marlin-spike-hash" and "belaying-pin-soup" were a regular ration. To be shanghaied on board a Bluenoser was regarded as the hardest fate that could befall a seaman.

Captain Bill MacCumber's reputation as a desperate sail-carrier and merciless man-master was notorious. One old tar at the Rialto, on Water Street, in Halifax, once said to me, "I knows four graves ashore that Capt'n Bill MacCumber 'as filled, and Gawd knows 'ow many 'ee's sent to Davy Jones's locker. A foremast 'and who sailed with MacCumber were lucky if 'e got buried in a graveyard on dry land."

MacCumber was coming in on a voyage from the Cape. Just off Horton Bluffs, at the

mouth of the Avon, a French nigger who had finished his trick at the wheel, instead of descending by the lee-ladder, jumped off the poop before the companion. This was sacrilege in sea custom, and MacCumber, who was standing by, hurled an iron weight at the offender, catching him fair in the head. The unfortunate black lived long enough to be carried ashore, where he expired. He was buried in the little churchyard in Chiveree, overlooking Horton Bluffs, "and he were one of the lucky ones," observed the Water Street tar.

He told me also of a Liverpool packet sailor named Paddy Moran, who was delivered to MacCumber by a crimp from Deptford.

"Poor Paddy didn't live to get out of the Channel. 'E didn't jump quick enough when a rope surged at the capstan, and MacCumber ups and brains 'im then and there, and jammed 'is body through the 'awspipe wid the anchor-chain as it was runnin' out."

MacCumber's name at last became so feared that it was almost impossible to get a crew to sail with him. The men would not sign the articles under such a master. To avert this the owners resorted to the subterfuge of signing on the crew with another captain, and when they were dropping the pilot the dreaded Bluenose would come aboard.

In 1914 I met in the American Navy at Vera Cruz a warrant-officer serving as tug-boat skipper, who in his early days had been shanghaied on board one of MacCumber's ships. He was an old man, formerly from Sweden. When a mere lad he told me that he had been gathered in by a boarding-house runner on Paradise Alley in Liverpool, and carried aboard the Bluenose ship. As soon as he found that he was exposed to the dreadful fate of the outward-bound with Captain Bill, he made up his mind that no peril could be so great as staying on board that ship. Late at night he went over the side with a piece of hatch-combing, and drifted for over an hour in the darkness of the Mersey, when by good fortune he was picked up. "But I would far sooner have drownded," said the old chap, "than to have risked the voyage with that Bluenose devil."

Bully MacCumber's last command was the *Orion*, a large ship owned by the Dimmocks of Windsor. The *Orion* sailed on her maiden voyage from Hantsport to Tilbury. She had taken on a general cargo for the Far East at Tilbury Docks, and was towed to the Downs to await her crew. The crew were duly sent by the shipping agent from Tower Hill, London, and arrived in charge of a host of boarding-house runners.

It was a bitter night in the Downs, and the *Orion* riding at her anchor was exposed to a biting blast from down Chan-

nel. But the bitter cold and the inclemency of the night only added to Bully MacCumber's delight in hazing his new crew. He ordered all hands aloft with sandstone and canvas to polish the yards.

Two men did not show sufficient alacrity, and MacCumber chuckled at the opportunity they gave him to "throw the fear of God into the rest." When the crew at last were released and allowed to go below, they went with murder in their hearts. In the forecastle was a quantity of saltpetre, to which they set fire, and fanned by the gale without, the forward part of the ship was soon in flames.

There was nothing for Captain MacCumber but to beach his ship, which he did, crashing on to a lee shore, a total wreck.

The mystic strain of the Bluenose Gael is shown in the legends that cling to some of our old shipyards. One of the most famous of the Bluenose clipper ships was the *Marco Polo*, built in 1851 by James Smith at St John. She was the pioneer clipper of the Australian Black Ball Line. According to a romantic story, it is stated that when the *Marco Polo* was building, Mr Smith, the owner of the shipyard, found a pot of gold at the end of the Marsh Road. By this lucky find he was enabled to finance the construction of his great ship.

More substantial was the pot of gold which the *Marco Polo* brought to her owners almost as soon as she was off the ways. Her first voyage from England to Australia was made in sixty-eight days, which long remained the record. In her first year afloat she sailed twice round the globe.

A partner in one of the famous shipyards of St John was John Frazer, formerly a moulder from Pictou. Mr Frazer was commonly known as "Eagle Johnnie." When he was a small boy a monstrous eagle had attempted to bear him away and devour him, hence his high-sounding appellation. But what a name for a builder of flying clipper ships!

Why did the Bluenose skipper leave the sea? Because of the passing of the sailing-ship is commonly given as the reason, but that is superficial. The same men who gained our renown in sail would have gained us an equal renown in steam.

The Bluenose skippers and the Yankee captains alike turned from their maritime empire because they lost the vision of the sea. The railroads, the prairie farms, and the wealth of an opening West allured them, and they turned their backs upon blue water.

England, with her cliffs for ever whitened by the foam of the Channel, has never been allowed to lose the vision of the sea, and she has never lost her heritage upon the water. That same heritage may yet return to the Bluenose breed.

STORM IN THE DESERT.

BY EDWARD LIVEING.

He got up from his table and advanced hesitatingly towards mine. I felt that I had seen his face somewhere before, and racked my mind for his name, but without success. Perhaps this was because I was tired. I had only just reached Cairo from England, had seen my luggage deposited in an upper bedroom of the Hotel Continental, and come out on to the terrace to enjoy the comparatively cool evening air and a "John Collins"—a drink that for Egypt in June has no equal. But enough of myself.

Before he reached me I had recalled his name.

"Lasserhayes!" I gasped in astonishment, holding out my hand.

He seemed too agitated to take it, and said hurriedly, "Thank God I've met you, old chap, but we can't talk here. Do come to a less crowded part of the terrace—behind that palm-tree over there."

As we walked over to the spot, I noticed people turning round from conversations and looking curiously at the boy. We sat down at a secluded table, and he immediately laid his elbows on it and leant right across it to speak to me. He looked years older than when I had last seen him about six months before in a London club. His face had been lit up then with youthful enthusiasm at the prospect of going to Egypt. Now his fair, almost white hair still fell in a childish curl over his forehead, but deep lines lay under his eyes and a queer quivering pallor beneath his sunburnt features.

"You've heard all about it, I suppose?" he asked.

"About what?"

"About Stanhope, I mean?"

"Nothing at all," I answered in growing astonishment.

Then I noticed that the boy was almost in tears, and began to realise that he had been through some terrible ordeal, and was badly in need of sympathy.

Stanhope I had known for several years, and I was more than an acquaintance of Lasserhayes.

"Strange things happen in Egypt," I said, placing my hand on his shoulder. "Tell me all about it."

"I will, I will," he replied, and he started his story.

. . . . .

Perhaps I should never have retold it but for the fact that I happened to find myself sitting in almost the same position on the terrace of the hotel a few evenings ago as that which we had occupied during its narration several years before. The gorgeously

coloured awning above my head, the almost identically similar setting out of chairs and tables, and, above all, the mingled noises that came from the neighbourhood of Opera Square, the cries of fruit-sellers and boot-blacks, the blowing of tram-horns, the jingling of bells on the horses of arabiyehs and the constantly shouted "Owar riglak" of their drivers, the whickering, gull-like noises of the kites wheeling over Ezbekieh Gardens — all these brought back vividly to my memory the sight of Dick Lasserhayes leaning over the table towards me and speaking in low hesitating tones, with those large sensitive eyes of his searching my face anxiously to see the effect that his words exercised upon me.

Lasserhayes is dead now. He took himself and his troubles to a glorious perishing on the Somme. That is another reason why I can now tell this story of the desert.

I.

Jeb'ail lies fifteen miles out in the Sahara. The nearest village to it in the valley of the Nile is a compact collection of mud buildings harbouring a thousand people. Its name is Messara. If you draw a line from Messara to Jeb'ail you can extend it westwards through about two thousand five hundred miles of blank desert till you approach the shores of the Atlantic. Perhaps this sounds rather an exaggerated way of putting things, but it is the kind of thought that enters into your mind when your body enters into the *gebel*.

"I tell you," said Dick Lasserhayes to me, "that first sight of the desert fairly took my breath away. You mustn't forget that I'd never been out of England before this expedition. Of course my mind had been crammed up with a lot of impressions on the way out, but this struck me more than anything else. Our camels had been ambling slowly up a long wadi leading gradually upwards through the limestone hills that shut in the Nile valley. Suddenly we were out in the open in a region of sand covered by thousands of enormous round stones. About half a mile away two or three small *tells* rose up out of the flatness, looking like miniature volcanoes. Towards the south-east you could see miles and miles of desert cut into vast furrows and ridges by several parallel ranges of limestone hills. I can tell you, I felt the sense of desolation there far more than I had felt it in mid-ocean a week before. I suppose that's because there's nothing moving. It's as it has been for thousands of years, and will remain for thousands of years. But I tell you the chief reason: it's the silence of empty spaces.

My God! I'd never before known what silence was—something almost tangible and solid."

It was Jeb'ail towards which the two Egyptologists, Gordon Stanhope and Dick Lasserhayes, were heading with their small cavalcade of camels, drivers, and servants on a day early in January. Not until an hour's trot had brought them on to the crest of the fourth limestone ridge did its long, softly massive contours become visible, rising out of the desert to the north-west like the bole of a giant felled tree in waste ground.

Dick, sensitive as he was, never forgot his first sight of Jeb'ail. A north wind, driving white clouds across the vast blue of the sky, made shadow after shadow go chasing across its grey, slightly-indented bosom, imparting to it a more than usually mysterious appearance.

"I know you'll think me imaginative and childish," Lasserhayes had continued. "Well, I admit I am, or rather that I was then. But that hill held my gaze from the very moment I caught sight of it. I think this was partly because of its conspicuousness in the surrounding desert, and because I had heard so many tales of its tomb, which had been only discovered and excavated during last year, and on which we were to work, tracing the mural paintings, which were said to be the products of insanity. At least, Amen-hotep, the old fellow who had designed the tomb and been buried in it, was believed to have been a madman. But there was something else about the hill . . .

"For a long time we trotted on, neither Stanhope nor I uttering a word. Then Stanhope, pulling at his thick little moustache, a habit of his before speaking, pointed suddenly ahead.

"'Tents'll be up, thank God! by time we get there. We'll have a meal and then to bed. Up to-morrow at half-past six. Must get on with things. Tomb completely excavated, so we'll start tracing after a bit of a look-over. Interesting place, I expect. At least, fairly interesting, though rumours always exaggerate.'

"'It looks an interesting place, doesn't it?' I remarked. 'Perhaps we'll stumble across some more tombs there.'

"'Perhaps,' replied Stanhope in that staccato manner of his. 'Anyhow, we've got our work cut out as it is over this tomb.'

"Before we reached the shadow of Jeb'ail the sun, just like a great yellow ball, fell quickly beneath its skyline, leaving behind in the lower sky a sort of shore of orange-coloured promontories jutting into a sea of carmine sprinkled with the golden islands of slender clouds.

"I said there was something else about Jeb'ail. It had looked so peaceful from a dis-

tance, but d'you know," the boy laughed nervously, "as we got into its shadow, there was something menacing and defiant about its black skyline and desolate ravines, as though it objected to our disturbing its secrets."

II.

The ridge, which rose about three hundred feet above the surrounding plateau, was an unusually large outcrop of limestone, varying in colour from light pink to a whitish ochre. On its eastern side it was composed of two layers, the lower layer, about a hundred feet high, reaching out into the desert and being intersected by small ascending wadis; the upper layer ascending more precipitously out of it into a somewhat craggy range three miles in length. The camp, consisting of three bell-tents and a marquee, lay in one of the central wadis of the lower layer, almost immediately beneath the tomb, which had been cut out of an overhanging portion of the upper ridge's summit.

At about seven o'clock the next morning the two archæologists followed by Ali, an aged Egyptian who acted as an antiquity guard, walked out of the wadi, in which lay the camp, and climbed in zigzag fashion up the more precipitous slope. Under the lea of the summit and on the level made by the excavation of sand from the tomb, Stanhope stopped to draw breath. He was a man of forty-five or so, and had never been fond of taking much exercise.

"Bit of a climb that," he puffed. "By Jove, though, it's a good view, Dick, isn't it?"

They looked back over the great waste of sand across which they had come yesterday. It stretched away glittering under the mounting sun like the wet sands of a vast inlet deserted by the tide, and was backed on the horizon by a dark-grey line of hills—the edge of the Eastern Desert on the farther side of the Nile valley. To the north there lay unlimited desert, broken by tells and wadis; to the south there lay unlimited desert, more monotonous than that towards the north, since it was more level and more sandy. Dominating this huge semicircle of yellowness lay the intense blue of the sky, which was bounded abruptly by the crest-line of Jeb'ail just above them. Lasserhayes, standing there, was conscious of a vastness that he had never known before, but he was more than all else conscious of something that seemed almost living, something solid, something that was restful and yet oppressive—the most complete and indescribable silence.

"Come on, Dick; let's have a look at our old friend's in-

sane picture-gallery": Stanhope's jocular words interrupted his contemplation.

The two men turned round and moved off to the shadowy doorway, fringed with hieroglyphic inscriptions and cut out of the base of a mass of solid limestone rising perpendicularly thirty feet above it to the skyline. For a moment Stanhope stood close to the wall of rock, glancing at the inscriptions. They consisted chiefly in laudations of Amenhotep, the deceased, and a setting forth of his numerous possessions in cattle, land, and slaves. There was no sign of insanity here, at any rate. He had encountered such inscriptions in or outside nearly every tomb on which he had worked during the last twenty years. Then suddenly a peculiar sentence, a kind of proverb, caught his eye.

"Look at this, Dick," he remarked simply, starting to con the ancient Egyptian.

"Do you understand the meaning?" he added a moment later, as though he suddenly remembered that his young assistant's knowledge of hieroglyphics was not at present very perfect.

"I confess I don't, doctor," replied the younger man. "At least, I can only make out one or two words."

"Which are?"

"One is, let's see—love, and the other's—cruelty, I think, isn't it?"

The older man laughed in a sly but kind way.

"You've got at least three months ahead of you in which to solve the riddle, Dick. I'll leave you to do it off your own bat!"

Meanwhile old Ali, the guard, had lit a candle with his trembling hands, and the two archæologists now followed him into the flickering obscurity of the tomb.

As he entered and tried to take stock of his surroundings, Lasserhayes experienced the sensation of a rushing in the air close to his head. This was followed by another rushing. He ducked his head involuntarily. Stanhope noticed the movement.

"Only bats," he said. "Damn 'em . . . probably done a lot of harm to the wall-paintings . . . . How they got here I can't imagine."

He ejaculated the sentences at intervals from one another, whilst he pushed an electric torch, which he had taken out of his pocket, into the various recesses of the tomb. Dick followed his example and found himself gazing at trains of loaded donkeys, at ships, at kneeling figures playing on harps, at oxen led by men in loin-cloths—a multitude of pictures, all possessing that strange beauty and vivid impressionistic power peculiar to ancient Egyptian art, which had so fascinated him as a student, but which now in its own surroundings filled him with a far more definite amazement.

After a short survey Stan-

hope noted to himself that the tomb was an almost perfectly rectangular quadrilateral, about thirty feet high, fifty feet long, and thirty feet wide; that the wall-paintings were, generally speaking, typical of Sixth-Dynastic art, but that they had been badly cut about by despoilers at a very early date, probably soon after the burial of Amen-hotep, and that the markings of bats had in many places completely destroyed them. He discovered no signs of insanity.

But, on making a second round, he noticed a deep and tall niche in the wall at the far end of the tomb. Its position opposite the entrance reminded him at once of similar niches in the tombs of the sun-cult period at Tell-el-Amarna. He turned his torch into the recess and revealed what he had expected, a life-size statue of Amen-hotep. An ingenious thief had detruncated the head. The figure itself was typical Sixth-Dynastic work, and represented the deceased in a dignified, upright, walking attitude, left foot foremost. The figure was nude except for an elaborately worked loin-cloth. The only feature that differentiated it from the other statues of the period was a long serpentine lash grasped in the right hand and trailing down to the pedestal. The right forearm slightly lifted, the hand grasping the end of the lash with a savage firmness, the lash itself, like the modern Egyptian *courbag*, made of hippopotamus-hide, with its life-like twirl struck Stanhope immediately as a remarkable representation of latent ferocity awaiting an opportunity to gratify itself. He looked at the short inscription carved above the niche. It was identical with the one above the doorway. He was on the point of exclamation, when something at the back of his mind prevented him. "No," it said, "Dick can find that out for himself; he needn't know, at any rate for the present." Some instinct, too, moved him to send Dick out of the tomb. He wished to see the tomb-shaft himself first.

"Look here, old chap," he said, "we'd better start work this afternoon, and those acetylene lamps need getting ready. Abdul's certain to start trying his hand on them some time this morning, and he's just as certain to make an unholy hash of them. I think you'd better go along and show him how the things work. . . . Don't bother to come up here again this morning," he added as an afterthought. "You'll have had quite enough work by the end of the day, and you may as well take a rest whilst you can."

He listened to the boy's footsteps crunching through the sand outside the tomb, then turned to the aged Ali, who stood in faithful attendance, still holding a candle in his trembling hands and muttering prayers in his beard. Old Ali always remembered his sins in

the darkness of tombs. He would never have remained so long—it was ten years or thereabouts—in the service of the Department of Antiquities except for monetary reasons. Another cause of these prayer mutterings was the desire to convey the impression of being a holy man. This, he felt, inspired confidence in the mind of a *bash mufettish*, or pious professor—a confidence which was unlikely to believe the possibility of such a holy man as old Ali not doing his work conscientiously, or of stealing trifling antiquities on occasions. . . . Stanhope, with his hard-bought knowledge of Egyptians, saw through old Ali like a piece of glass. But he rather liked the old humbug for all that.

"Now then, Ali," he questioned him in Arabic, "have you put that rope-ladder down the shaft yet?"

"See! It is all there, effendim," replied the old man, pointing his candle in the direction of the southern end of the tomb.

Together they removed the thin planking that covered the opening of the shaft.

"Stay up here," commanded Stanhope, "and hold your candle out—so—till I get down to the bottom."

He felt with his feet for the first rung of the ladder, and let himself down slowly over the side. The shaft must have been fifty feet deep. He was glad to set foot on the bottom, as the ladder began to swing out from the wall in a most uncomfortable manner just after he got half-way down. Some bats brushed past his face. The air was close and fusty. But he forgot the discomfort of his surroundings as soon as he switched on his electric torch; for, probing the darkness with its light, he discovered all around him some of the most elaborate and most perfectly-preserved art that he had ever encountered in Egypt. The original outlines had been limned by a masterly hand, and the colours, still as fresh as when they had been first laid on, had not slurred over the outlines as in the tomb above, and in so much of Sixth-Dynastic art.

This was Stanhope's first impression. He now lit a candle and placed it on the edge of a long and fairly deep recess that had obviously once contained the sarcophagus. A few more bats flew away and up the shaft, squeaking with fear at the unnatural light. For a moment the archæologist wondered why they had not done more damage to the paintings, but then recalled the fact that the shaft had been blocked up with sand until just lately. This fact, of course, explained the perfect preservation of the decorations around him. But as he took more careful stock of their character he almost began to wish that they had never been preserved. The scenes which they presented imparted a sense of gruesome decadence, that fascinated and repelled

him at one and the same time. They were ranged all round the three walls of the chamber leading out of the shaft and in the recess, cut out of the left-hand wall, that had contained the sarcophagus. One wall was occupied with the portrayal of the preparation of tortures. Here men were heating prongs and other instruments to a red-hot glow over the fire; next to them another lot of men were pouring boiling water into a vast cauldron; next to them were some sly-looking old men mixing apparently noxious drugs. Group after group of these masters in the act of cruelty succeeded one another, till coming to the narrow wall at the far end Stanhope found a comparatively enormous figure of Amenhotep presiding over the proceedings from a raised seat. On either side of him gangs of young slaves were being driven along under the lashes of their guards, while a few of them were grovelling for mercy at his feet. The Nubian guards, with their black faces and gorgeous clothing, the slaves, clad in loin-cloths, with drops of blood dripping from their backs and peculiarly protuberant chests, the smile of mad joy on Amen-hotep's face as he lifted his *courbag* to thrash his supplicating victims —all combined to produce a mixture of emotions in the heart of Stanhope that he could hardly define. The dominating emotion at first was, perhaps, one of disgust. Stanhope possessed a rather Puritanical soul, and did not, in some ways, possess a strong sense of humour. But his Puritanism was a kind of forced product. . . .

Over the presiding Amenhotep Stanhope noticed another hieroglyphic inscription. He found it to be identical with the one outside the entrance and with that in the tomb itself. It ran :—

"When thou art young, men and women will do many things for the love of thee. But when thou art old, thou shalt gain nothing save by cruelty. These are the words of Amenhotep, son of &c."

III.

For the first six weeks all went well. Both archæologists applied themselves to the pictures in the tomb itself, and Stanhope began to take a considerable pride in the development of his young friend's tracing abilities. Besides, firm ties existed between the two men. Three years before, Lasserhayes's parents had been drowned in a wreck off the eastern coast of Spain. At the time he had only just completed his first year at Cambridge. The news had completely overwhelmed him; He was an only child. He

had been deeply attached to his mother. He had always been accustomed to having everything done for him. In the little country home in Surrey, which his father, a retired infantry colonel, had been just able to maintain with a none too large income, he had learned nothing of the world. And he had learned little more of it at Cambridge. One of the executors of the will, however, had once been an inexperienced subaltern in Colonel, then Captain, Lasserhayes's company. This executor was Stanhope. The two men had drifted apart a good deal since Stanhope had thrown up a military career and taken to Egyptology. Stanhope, however, had happened to be in London at the time of his friend's death, and he wired to his son, whom he had never seen, to come and discuss the winding-up of his father's estate. He gave him lunch at his club, and discovered that the young man was completely unversed in business matters, and very much in need of assistance and sympathy. Remembering how he had himself been looked after in his early days by the boy's father, and attracted by his youthfulness and innocence, Stanhope constituted himself *in loco parentis*, rescued about £300 a year for the boy out of the estate, and made him come and live with him in the vacations. Stanhope was unmarried. He gradually came to look on Dick as his son. He interested the boy so much in his Egyptology that he went in for Oriental studies, and had ended by taking a First Class Tripos in them in the preceding summer. Stanhope was vastly pleased. They had had a champagne dinner in London soon after the event, and Stanhope had remarked in his staccato manner—

"Damn' good, Dick; damn' good. I'll get the Egyptian Archæological Association to send you out as my assistant on my next job, if you like. What d'you say to that?"

Dick had assented with more than pleasure, and the matter had been successfully arranged. He was glad to make his entrance into this new world, for him, under Stanhope's tutelage. He had a fondness, mixed with admiration, for him. For some reason that he could not have explained, he appreciated the aloofness of his manner, the way in which he did kind actions without saying much about them, his intense energy and efficiency, his knowledge of the world, and the easiness with which he moved through it. As to his gruffness of talking, which at times was more accentuated than at others, he had come to consider it as a sort of attempt to conceal too kind a heart. All of which shows that he understood Stanhope up to a point, but only up to a point. I flatter myself that I understood the man far better than he did. I once had the audacity

to mention this fact to Lasserhayes. Of course, the boy flared up at once. He was, as I have said, very sensitive—too sensitive. . . .

Stanhope used to work eight hours a day with a concentrated energy that the younger man could not possibly maintain. In the evenings, after tea, Lasserhayes would take long walks in the desert, accompanied by Abdul Afri, a young Arab whom he had picked up in Cairo to act as his servant. On the first occasion he had taken a walk on his own, but on his return Abdul, with his dark-brown eyes shining with displeasure, had told him—

"Genabou (master) must never walk again without his servant. It was not proper, it was not dignified. Besides, he might lose himself in the desert, whereas Arabs could never go astray."

After this Abdul always accompanied him, and, indeed, contributed much to the pleasure of Dick's rambles. He was probably about eighteen years old, though, when on one of these early walks Dick asked him his age, he said—

"It is fifteen or sixteen years, perhaps, since I was born. But how should I know? Surely only my mother can know, and she is dead, may Allah be merciful to her."

He was a small youth, delicately made in face and figure. His aquiline nose and small lips gave him the aristocratic look common to so many Arabs, while his large glittering eyes, his flashing white teeth contrasting with the olive colour of his skin, and the easy bearing of his figure in general, clad in a gaily-coloured turban, a short white galabeah, with a criss-cross patterned shawl of orange and blue thrown casually over the shoulder, and a pair of new leather sandals, made an immediate impression on Lasserhayes of much potential vigour. And vigour he most assuredly had—a fund of it which never seemed to leave him. Keeping at a respectful distance behind his master, he would maintain a flow of conversation that never ceased except when he ran away to pick up a stone or a possible object of antiquity, for which Lasserhayes, with his youthful expectations of treasure, was always on the look-out, or to catch some tired bird that had sought the ground in journeying from one of the oases to the valley of the Nile. These were usually the honey-birds that you see clustering in *sont*-trees anywhere in Egypt. It was a strange sight to watch him suddenly speed away over the sand, come to a standstill, and then walk on, gradually bending low and fixing his attention on the prey as though his large eyes were mesmerising it, until his arm shot out and held up to one's distant view a second afterwards the little, quivering, green object.

Outwardly Dick would show an amused tolerance of his servant on these walks. As

a matter of fact, what he would have done without him I cannot imagine, for Stanhope began to be so absorbed in his work that he never appeared except for meals, in which he would discuss details of the programme for the morrow in his short staccato way, subsequently relapsing into silence. After all, the young fellow's temperament was receptive rather than creative. He was brilliant at learning languages, he could adjust himself to his surroundings easily and settle down in almost any company; he was a mental worker who got through a great deal of work very quickly and very ably in spasmodic bursts, but who during the intervals required entertaining people to amuse him. Altogether he was more of a passive than an active personality, and he liked to move through life as a spectator, absorbing other people's ideas, actions, and vitality.

By the middle of February, despite Abdul's companionship, it must be admitted that he was becoming very tired of the desert. For any man the restfulness of seeing and hearing no movement in great open spaces is certain at length to turn into oppressiveness. And for Lasserhayes, young and with his especial need for a vitalising environment, every succeeding day became more monotonous. The orange-coloured sun would appear on the horizon each morning; a hasty breakfast would ensue; then would come the long period of tracing by the aid of acetylene light in that tomb, whose age of four thousand five hundred years made him feel how small a thing his own life was, followed by his walk every evening after tea across endless spaces of sand and limestone covered in by a blue sky that very rarely produced clouds. Even the massed and flaming colours of the sunset over the gaunt ridge of Jeb'ail lost their early impressiveness.

But in the nocturnal stillness, when the light from the moon and stars threw soft weird shadows over the landscape and dimmed the horizon, and little winds blew up suddenly and died away again as suddenly through the wadis at the foot of Jeb'ail, he would stand outside the entrance of his bell-tent for several minutes before retiring for the night, feeling a peculiar sensation that something was bound to happen soon, something that would relieve the monotony of the camp's life, something mysterious, something that seemed to grow more imminent at the end of every day.

At the end of February Dick obtained a temporary release from monotony. In the afternoon of the 27th, after the arrival of the two *sahas* with the water and the post, Stanhope remarked—

"Like to go to Assiut for a couple of days?"

Dick assented with obvious pleasure.

"Thought so," replied Stan-

hope. "Various banking difficulties about the expedition you'll have to go into."

He was given definite information as to clearing up these difficulties. The next afternoon he departed with the *sahas* on an extra donkey that they had brought up.

On the same afternoon Stanhope made his second descent down the tomb-shaft, this time with the purpose of starting work on its insane pictures.

IV.

That first afternoon's work at the bottom of the tomb-shaft did not merely fatigue the indomitable Stanhope: it unnerved him. It is not until you come to trace ancient Egyptian mural paintings that you learn the intricate subtleties of drawing that give the general contours seen from a distance their peculiar power. Now, as figures and objects began to form themselves before his eyes upon the transparent paper, he noticed things which repelled that second nature of his, with its commonsense, its modesty, its kindness, cultivated with an almost unconscious care from the days of his early manhood. The cruelty latent in the bend of an arm, the fierceness of movement in the jagglings of a lash, the hateful submissiveness in the pose of a victim's body, sent sudden physical shivers of repulsion through him.

Towards five o'clock he began to feel extremely tired, and returned to camp for tea. After tea he began to read a book of detective stories, but he found himself taking not the least bit of interest in the pages which he perused and turned over mechanically. He was sitting in a camp-chair in the Indian marquee, which served as "mess" room and sitting-room combined. A slight evening breeze had got up, blowing through the open door opposite to him, and making a tinkling noise in the little painted Japanese glasses suspended by Lasserhayes, when they first arrived, from the horizontal pole supporting the roof. Why this tinkling should so affect him Stanhope could not understand. But it made him lay down his book, it forced a sensation of utter loneliness upon him, an extreme desire to get away from his surroundings into the outside world. He began to think about his mother, to whom he had been very attached, and who had thoroughly spoilt him. But Stanhope was not the sort of man to stand "sentimentalising." He prided himself on his self-control.

"All damned rot," he muttered to himself. "Perhaps I've been overdoing things a little bit lately. I'll take things a bit easier for the time being."

He applied himself once more

to his book and read on, mechanically turning over leaf after leaf of print.

Stanhope went to bed soon after the evening meal, but he did not sleep for hours. His mind was still casting itself back to the days of his childhood and raking up all kinds of apparently unreasonable memories, which he was unable to prevent. At one moment he saw a vivid picture of himself squashing flies on the nursery windows, at another moment, of his throwing wooden bricks at his grandmother's face as she sat in an arm-chair in the breakfast-room weeping silently in her dotage; now he recalled his savage enjoyment in the act of shooting at a trespassing cat with his air-gun, and now again the wild delight that filled him as he flogged a small boy in his capacity of senior prefect. At every fresh recollection he shuddered and tried to think of other things, but the recollections would not be denied admittance, and they continued to crowd into his consciousness with overmastering power until he fell into a troubled sleep.

And in sleep he dreamed. . . . He was reading a book, which conveyed no interest to him. It was a matter of turning page after page of dull black print on white paper. This was ridiculous. Something was bound to happen soon . . . and, as though to confirm his expectations, the print began to vanish from the pages. The pages became transparent. He found himself placing his pencil upon them and tracing horrible deformed images as they rose up beneath each page and penetrated it. In terror he kept on turning over page after page, but the same change took place in every fresh leaf—the print left it; it became transparent, and the images started to come through the paper. He had to trace them quickly, for something told him that they would otherwise leap through the paper and sear his mind. He continued to trace and trace; then suddenly he realised that he was too tired to go on. A deformed figure with a devilish grinning face rose up through the paper and leapt at his head, brandishing a whip. The whip had a tongue of white fire at the end of it. This shot into his head and covered him in a burning white light. He struggled with and tried to get away from it. His brain began to reel, in another second it would crack. . . .

He awoke to find himself perspiring freely and the moon shining down at him through the door of the tent. Strong gusts of wind came and went, throwing sand patteringly on the canvas walls. He could hear the Japanese glasses clinking in the near-by marquee. In the pause of the winds the silence was almost stifling.

V.

A less hardened man than Stanhope would have given in after that night. He would have done the sensible thing, and taken a week's leave in Cairo or Alexandria. But his whole attitude to life was never to give in to anything. Stanhope fought with life instead of running with it. He had no elasticity of soul—a soul which could never bend, but which would tilt at every wall of adversity till it broke it down or was itself broken in the attempt. God only knows the extent of the struggle through which he went during the following fortnight, but he worked on at the tomb-shaft with a bitter fury.

He hardly noticed Dick's return from Assiut. As the boy told me: "He scarcely said a word to me the evening I came back. He seemed to be looking through me with a kind of determined rage in his eyes and chin, which he stuck out in a grim manner, clenching his teeth. He looked as if he were an officer waiting for the enemy to come into sight and within range of his rifles. He asked a few words about the business with the bank at Assiut. I went into the whole thing in detail, but he didn't seem to take in what I was saying. He just nodded his head at times, and finally said—

"'Well, anyhow, you settled it all up all right; didn't you?'

"I replied that I had. He said—

"'Well, that's that,' and walked off to his tent."

As I have remarked before, Lasserhayes was one of those people who like to move through life as a spectator. He was very worried about Stanhope, but, acting on his instincts, he made no attempt to ask him if anything was the matter. In fact, he was afraid to approach him during the three days that followed his return. Sometimes he would try to make conversation during the meals, but Stanhope would reply in a more than usually staccato manner, as though he did not wish to be bothered.

On the evening of the third day Dick was assailed with a headache and a coldness which spread through his body and made him shiver. He felt so ill that he took his temperature, which he found to be up to 102°. He then retired to bed, where he remained on and off for the next ten days with an unpleasant dose of relapsing fever, probably caught in Assiut—a town insidiously beautiful and poisonously damp and mosquito-ridden.

"What I should have done without Abdul I don't know," he told me. "The boy looked after me like a trained nurse. He hardly ever seemed to leave me. He was always at

hand with tea and brandy and aspirin. The fever gave me a most painful gastric catarrh and a dull unceasing headache. He used to sit beside me on an upturned box, holding my hand and massaging my head. His eyes had a sort of hypnotic influence over me, and he often sent me to sleep simply by looking hard at me, and repeating softly over and over again—

"'You are about to sleep now, genabou—you are about to sleep.'

"Stanhope would visit me for a few minutes in the morning and evening. He looked worried, strained, and pale. I asked him one evening if he thought he had caught my fever. He replied that he was a bit overdone with the heat—that was all. But he was restless and walked about the tent, and I felt as if he wanted to ask me my advice on something, yet could not bring himself to do it. I expect I ought to have been more sympathetic, but I was feverish and feeling like nothing on earth. It certainly was terribly hot. The variable winds had died down, and the night air was even more oppressive than that of the day. Stanhope left the tent suddenly. I felt so lonely that night that I kept Abdul by the side of my camp-bed, humming songs in a low monotonous undertone."

VI.

When Stanhope took his solitary evening meal that night, the cook brought it into the marquee. Stanhope disliked the cook. For one thing, he spoke English, and Stanhope always distrusted Egyptians who spoke English. The man looked agitated, and, immediately he had put the soup before his master, he burst out—

"Your servant, he run away, your honour. He say he no like place, he no like master. He very wicked man, Mahomed."

"Stop that damned gibberish and speak Arabic," shouted Stanhope, a sudden wrath surging up within him.

The man cowered away from the table and told Stanhope plausible lies of how Mahomed had fled from the camp, and how he had not noticed his disappearance till too late. He had then looked towards the valley and seen him afar off.

Stanhope had liked Mahomed. He had acted as his servant in Egypt for the last five years. He had paid him well. He had procured him a good position as an Antiquity Guard in upper Egypt. He finished his meal in a sullen anger, which was not lessened by the oppressive heat of the evening, and by the relentless flies. He had to flick them away incessantly with his serviette. When the

cook brought in the cup of Turkish coffee, he found him deftly squashing them between his hands and chuckling oddly as he did so.

Stanhope retired to his tent and his camp-bed. For a long time he lay awake listening to the sad monotonous love ditties that Abdul was singing in the next tent, and which floated clearly to him on the still air. The emotional power of the boy's voice, the infinite gradation of the notes, tender and yearning, had a strange effect upon him. He had for years denied himself any expression of emotion, and he realised that he had been wrong in this. He had for years shown no emotion to any one, he had shown no affection for anybody. Perhaps it was because he had never been given any affection—any affection such, for instance, as Abdul was showing for Dick. Suddenly the strange words in Amen-hotep's tomb flashed into his mind—

"When thou art young, men and women will do many things for the love of thee. But when thou art old, thou shalt gain nothing save by cruelty."

Surely they explained everything—his servant's callous departure despite all that he had done for him, the cook's treachery, Abdul's devotion to Lasserhayes, and his scarcely veiled insolence to him. As to that young fellow's illness, he suspected that it was a pretence to get out of work and out of his company. He remembered now how glad the ungrateful young dog had been at the idea of going to Assiut.

"I'll teach 'em a lesson," he muttered to himself. "I'll teach 'em a lesson."

Then he thought—

"I'm an old man, an old man. I'm not wanted; no one cares twopence about me."

He wanted sympathy and affection as he had never wanted it for years. . . .

He awoke soon after dawn. The patter of rain on the canvas walls of the tent prevented him from further sleep. He got up and, after he had dressed, unpacked a revolver and *courbag* from his kit-bag.

"I'm an old man, but I'll teach 'em a lesson," he muttered.

VII.

Followed by the old and faithful Ali, Stanhope climbed wearily up the sandy slopes that rose to the black aperture of the tomb. Grey clouds sped across the vast blue of the sky. Half-way up the hill Stanhope rested and watched in a half-conscious way the giant shadows sweeping across the desert, up the slopes on which he sat, and away into the Sahara over the crest of Jeb'ail. But the sun was quickly gaining power, and hosts of flies began to buzz

about in the increasing warmth. Stanhope hit out at them with his *courbag*, and Ali flicked at them with an old fly-swish made of palm-leaves, while muttering continuously—

"What are you doing here? What do you want with us? Go home; for the love of Allah, go home!"

They moved on, and ten minutes later the acetylene lamp was flaring at the bottom of the tomb-shaft, while the mumbling Ali was swishing flies off his master as he traced the great figure of Amen-hotep. Strange ideas began to work in Stanhope's mind. A wild glitter appeared in his eyes. Even old Ali, lost in prayers and mutterings, noticed a change in his master. He redoubled his prayers to "Allah the wise, the just, the merciful." Towards noon Ali saw Stanhope lay down his pencil and turn round to him. His face was contorted, a horrible lear spread across it. Ali was terrified. "My heart was like water," he afterwards said to Lasserhayes, "so that my hands shook and my knees trembled."

"Your honour, there are evil spirits here," he moaned as he backed towards the ladder. "Allah preserve us from them."

"Aha! so you have felt them too, my poor Ali," rejoined Stanhope with a queer laugh.

"But to old men like you and me, Ali," he continued, coming up and wagging his finger at Ali's face, "they are good spirits. When we are young, Ali, the world loves us for our good looks, our quick brains, our enthusiasms. But when we grow old and the fire dies away from our hearts and faces, then the world in its turn becomes cold to us. Then it is time to terrify the world—to terrify it, I repeat," and his voice rose to a shrill crescendo, while his eyes, as Ali described them, "burned with an unholy fire and a strange cunning."

"Who in this camp cares for you or me, Ali? None care for us: they leave us to do the work. Now, Ali, the good spirits of this tomb have whispered in our ears. We will go by their guidance. You are tired, Ali; your teeth are chattering with weariness. You shall rest this afternoon. Go and tell Abdul to bring me lunch and to stay here in your place."

"Yes, your honour," answered the terrified Ali, one foot already on the lowest rung.

"And mind you see that he comes!" shouted Stanhope after the figure retreating quickly up the ladder and mumbling prayers to the all-wise Allah.

When the terrified Ali had climbed out of sight over the top of the tomb-shaft, Stanhope sat down on a large stone and surveyed Amen-hotep's *picture-gallery*. Though it was midday and stifling hot, and he had continuously to lash out at the hosts of flies, he felt a strange elation. He was

young again, an energising flow of blood pulsed through him. Something in his heart said, "Let yourself go; you are a powerful man, and you've never tested your power."

If Abdul showed the slightest sign of insubordination, he would punish him. Stanhope saw things more logically than he had ever done before. He knew exactly why he hated Abdul. He had wanted him for his servant the whole time, but in the absurd magnanimity which he had artificially cultivated all his life he had let Lasserhayes have him. And Abdul had not only robbed him of Dick's friendship, but had traded on the fact of his intimacy with him to show a half-veiled insolence to Stanhope. Abdul was too handsome. Stanhope knew perfectly well that he wished to inflict a violent physical injury on the boy's good looks.

A trudge of sandalled feet sounded on the floor of the tomb. A moment later Abdul in his white galabeah was swinging easily down the ladder, hanging on with his right hand, and in his left hand holding the luncheon-basket. Stanhope noted the lithe poise of the figure, as it swung from one rung to the other. He never had possessed, never would possess that elasticity of movement; but, closing his hand tighter round the end of his *courbag*, he realised with a grim satisfaction that he could reduce that elasticity to a writhing heap.

Reaching the bottom of the ladder, Abdul turned round, deposited the basket on the floor, and prepared to mount again.

"Where are you going to?" demanded Stanhope.

"To my master, your honour."

"I am your master, Abdul."

"Lasserhayes effendi, he is my master, sir," replied the boy sullenly. "He is sick. He needs me."

"Say no more. Remain here," Stanhope ordered.

There was that in the Englishman's voice and face, and the threatening manner in which he clutched his *courbag*, that stayed Abdul. He was a youth of spirit, but he was a weakling compared with the other man, and he had no weapon.

"Come here," continued Stanhope. "Undo the luncheon-basket. . . . Spread out the food on the napkin . . . so. . . . Now you can sit in front of me while I eat, and fan the flies away."

Stanhope made a most satisfactory lunch, and he consumed a good deal of whisky with it. He appeared quite preoccupied, but now and again he glanced slily at Abdul and noticed that the boy was looking inquisitively at the paintings.

After lunch he set to work again on the great picture of Amen-hotep. Everything was going to plan. He would continue to work till Abdul was tired out. . . . Now and again he glanced round at him and

noticed pleasurably the beads of perspiration gathering on the soft features. Every moment it seemed to be getting hotter and hotter down there. . . .

Stanhope worked on relentlessly, and it must have been several hours before what he had expected happened The swish of the fly-whisk stopped suddenly, and Stanhope, in the act of tracing the final twist of Amen-hotep's lash, turned to see that Abdul, with head sunk on chest, had fallen asleep. He prodded him with the firm end of his *courbag*. The boy's eyelids opened, and the deep-brown pupils looked dreamily at him.

"What is this? Get on with your work!" exclaimed Stanhope.

"Tired. A little rest, your honour," the weary young Arab muttered.

Stanhope was perspiring freely, now that the cool swish of the fly-whisk had stopped. Flies were crawling down his neck, around his eyes and lips, and across the sensitive palms of his hands.

"If you don't go on," he growled between teeth clenched with anger, "I shall whip you."

Abdul was more awake now.

"I am not going on," he replied; "I am returning to my master."

The ring of rebellion in his voice and the quick and determined way in which he got up and made for the ladder showed that he had the spirit of the true-blooded Arab. But his actions set the final spark to Stanhope's pent-up emotions. He lashed out at the retreating figure with his *courbag* and rose hurriedly to his feet. By the time he reached the ladder Abdul was already several rungs up it. He caught hold of his right ankle, and his desire to inflict injury on the boy increased as he felt the warm flesh in his grasp. The Arab hit out at Stanhope's head with his left hand. At the same moment Stanhope pulled him down by his ankle with all the strength he could gather. The ladder swung round, and Abdul, losing hold, dropped to the ground, and in some unknown way his arms got caught up in the rungs of the ladder, so that he was left struggling to get free with his face to the wall.

Stanhope saw his chance. He picked up his *courbag* and hit out at the struggling figure. He struck again and again. He tore the galabeah off the boy's shoulders, and lashed out at the soft skin. Great weals of red sprang up in the olive-coloured surface. The man was exultant. It was the supreme moment of his life. He had put his desires into action. He felt himself to be a great man, a god. . . . The walls of the tomb-shaft, with their gay-coloured pictures of cruelty, swung round and round; the limp body tied up in the ladder seemed to sway towards him and away from him. He lashed out at it each time that it came

near him. The pictures on the walls whirled round faster and faster. Suddenly darkness surged up into his brain and vision; a devil leapt at him out of the darkness, grasping his chest and neck so that he strove vainly for breath. . . .

VIII.

It was at the end of April that the storm came. Two weeks had passed since Stanhope had tottered into the camp and told Dick that he had given his "young pup of a servant a good licking for his damned insolence." Ali had been secretly pleased, for, being an Egyptian, he was jealous of the position held by the young Arab; but the old man, with frequent prayers, had assisted Lasserhayes and the cook to drag the unconscious Abdul out of the tomb-shaft, to carry him down to the camp, and to lay him on the young effendi's camp-bed.

The sudden crisis had the effect of making Dick completely shake off the remnants of his illness. Also it had the unusual effect of driving him out of his usual attitude to life—that of a passive spectator—into the arena of activity and passion.

"Mind you," he was anxious to tell me afterwards, "I'd seen trouble blowing up for some time past. But there's nothing that I hate so much as a row. I like to keep out of these things, perhaps because once I enter them they hurt me so deeply. They destroy my peace of mind for months afterwards. I simply can't afford to have rows."

I can still see him pouting his lips like a spoilt child, as he made this remark. Then he continued—

"But from that night onwards I went in right up to my neck. I let myself go properly. As I say, I'd noticed things for some time past—even before I went to Assiut. It's a funny thing what the desert and the kind of life you lead in it does to some men. It seems to resolve them into beasts. You notice little things about them at meals. They get greedier and greedier as time goes on. If the tea and other stuff's put down at their end to serve, they help themselves to it first. Sometimes Stanhope often forgot to give me tea; he was too damned intent on drinking what he had poured out for himself. Often he would take advantage of his position by eating two helpings of a course to my one. I tell you those little things count more than anything else in a life such as ours was. On such occasions I used to hate Stanhope; I used to hate the animal greed that appeared in his face. I used to think, 'Why on earth did I ever like the man?

Surely I ought to have seen that all his kindness was superficial?' And then I would suppress my anger by swearing to myself that a man who is selfish in little details is unselfish in the bigger things of life. So I would lull myself back into the attitude of an outside person laughing at the small frictions of our camp existence.

"And then came that horrible evening when Stanhope walked shakily into the camp and rasped out what he had done to Abdul in a voice whose cruel cynicism seemed intended to hurt me as much as the news.

"For a moment I didn't know what to say; then I blurted out angrily—

"'What right have you to touch my servant, anyhow?'

"'Because I run this camp, you young puppy,' he replied, looking at me as if he wanted me to shrivel up. 'Let me tell you once and for all, I'm sick of your blasted impudence, and I'm not going to have any more of it.'

"The sudden disclosure of hatred in his words and the menacing way he held his *courbag* so infuriated me that I couldn't say anything for a moment. At last I shouted after him—

"'Who the hell d'you think pays for my servant—you or I? And, by God, I won't have any more of your damned rudeness either!'

"He disappeared contemptuously into his tent. I thought of Abdul, and my anger went in my pity for the boy. I took Ali and the cook up to the tomb, and when I looked down the shaft and heard the boy groaning, I was terrified. I realised then how attached I had become to him."

At this point of his narrative Lasserhayes shivered and drew in his breath. I never heard in detail his experiences that evening in the shaft.

"I can't bring myself to say much about the moments I spent down there"—he said it in a strained kind of way. "I never could stand the sight of blood or of pain; but what appalled me more perhaps even than the sight of Abdul, was the uncanniness of the place with its horrible pictures;" and he placed his left hand to his eyes as if to shut out an evil vision.

"Anyhow," he continued, "we got the boy down to my tent, and that night he told me in broken whispers his recollections of the afternoon. Looking back at the whole business now, I think how strange a sight it would have been to the average Englishman if he had suddenly been shoved into that tent in the desert — myself and the Arab boy whispering together, he clasping my hand tightly as a spasm of pain got him, myself grasping my revolver in case Stanhope appeared."

It had come to that, you see. From that night on Lasserhayes always carried a revolver concealed about his clothes,

not because of hate, but because of fear. He began to realise that Stanhope was either unbalanced or quite mad. If he could only have been definitely certain that he was mad, he would have gone into Assiut and got a doctor to come out, though even that action would have been attended with considerable difficulties. But he was not definitely certain; and, as Stanhope was his chief, the embarrassment into which he would have landed himself, if the doctor had come out and expressed his opinion that Stanhope was quite sane but a little overwrought, would have been, to say the least of it, unpleasant.

Altogether Lasserhayes adopted the attitude that one would have expected of him. He let things slide and tried to persuade himself that everything would turn out all right —"after all, we only had three more weeks of it before us." If the question had been put bluntly to him, "Don't you think that Stanhope is quite possibly a homicidal lunatic?" he would have tried to laugh it away. Still, as I say, he carried his revolver about with him; and at night Abdul, who with the exuberant health of youth and out-door life threw off his punishment in the course of a few days, slept, or pretended to sleep, on the sandy floor of the tent near his master's bedside.

As to Stanhope, what went on in his mind during this period I cannot pretend to say. I am inclined to think that he was comparatively sane. He seems, at any rate, to have been free of those violent emotions that had been assailing him. He was probably quite content, believing that he had cowed the other members of the camp. Every one seemed quiet and obedient, even Lasserhayes. If he made any more of those remarks, though, . . . He walked about quite openly, with his *courbag* and a revolver fastened to his belt. He finished his work on the tomb-shaft, and had it covered over with a blanket to prevent the sand getting into it. Then he took a rest.

The rain and the variable winds departed. Then came two days of intense heat. All day a silver haze shimmered over the eye-scorching sand, in whose small hollows patches of black—the collections of small flies which Abdul called *min*—formed everywhere. There was not a breath of air all day, and the feeling of suffocation was intensified, if anything, at night.

"At the end of the second day," said Dick, "I was damned glad to finish my work. I only wore a pair of flannel trousers and canvas shoes in the tomb —it was so hot that I would have taken even them off, but you can't very well do that in the presence of a native, especially a Mahommedan. I was so tired when I came out into the open that I forgot that I had left my revolver on the stone sacrificial basin by the top of the tomb-shaft.

I noticed some funny things when I came out. A herd of gazelle was trekking northwards along the skyline of Jeb'ail; the crescent moon had already risen and looked just like a piece of white cardboard pasted meaninglessly on to a bright blue wall-paper; and a wind, very slight but mercifully cool, was blowing up from the south.

"'Hamda'lillāh,' I said to Ali, who was with me. 'There is a kind wind.'

"'May Allah have mercy,' he replied, 'but it is a wicked wind. Presently there is sand everywhere; there is much heat and terrible weather; everything finish," and he spread out his hands, lifting them up to the sky and making a whistling noise in his throat.

The boy looked southwards over the vast stretches of sand and limestone cut into parallel ridges and wadis. The far horizon and the sky had already merged together in a menacing obscurity. As he watched, the wind died away for a moment, and the accentuated silence terrified him with the sensation, which he had experienced several times before, that some horrible event was imminent.

IX.

The storm arrived in full force in the early hours of the morning. Dick lay perspiring on his bed in the terrific heat that it brought with it. He got up late in the morning. He opened the flap to step out. As he did so a stream of sand shot into the tent, and the inpouring wind nearly carried it away. He brushed the sand out of his eyes and made for the marquee. He could only just discern it in the pall of yellow mist that concealed everything. Just occasionally this pall was broken through by a watery gleam of sunshine which revealed wave after wave of sand sweeping at tremendous speed across the desert beneath.

Once outside the marquee he looked towards Stanhope's tent. He could hardly believe his eyes. It had disappeared. Or was this only the effect of the sand-mist? He went nearer to the spot where it had been and found the camp-bed with the bed-clothes covered in a film of sand, two overturned boxes, and some books, whose coloured covers stuck weirdly out of the yellowness that half-buried them. Everything else, everything of no weight, had been whirled away into the Sahara.

"The first question that came to my mind," Lasserhayes continued, "was what had happened to the bundles of tracing-papers that contained the whole of our four months' work. Then I thought, 'Good heavens, the man'll be mad with anger over this.' Then a further horrible thought flashed across me, 'I haven't got my revolver. I've left it somewhere—where?'

"The next moment I was dashing up to the tomb. Several times I was nearly thrown off my feet by the force of the wind, hot as the air from a blast-furnace. I was in my shirt-sleeves and a pair of shorts, and my arms and knees were positively scorched by it. And the sand! It surged out of the mist in waves that hit your body with a thousand needles. Added to all that, I was thinking, 'Perhaps he's following me, waiting for me,' and I kept on muttering, 'Damn the mist!'

"How I got up to the tomb at all I don't know, for the track our footsteps had made was blotted out by a new and perfectly level layer of sand.

"Suddenly the top of the ridge appeared out of the gloom, and just beneath it the black entrance to the tomb. It looked much bigger and gaunter than usual. I thought I heard some one shouting, and stopped dead for a minute. Then I laughed at my fears, for it was only the wind wailing along the top of the ridge and down the small wadis, or the sand hitting the rocks.

"In another moment I had passed into the tomb. It was darker than usual inside, and I cursed myself for not having brought my torch, as I groped about near the top of the shaft for my revolver. At last I found the sacrificial basin, and put my hand into it. The revolver had gone!

"'Damn!' I muttered.

"My voice sounded oddly in the darkness. At the same moment I must somehow have become conscious that there was another presence in the tomb, for I sprang to my feet in a strange fright and listened. Not a sound. At last I couldn't bear the silence any longer, and shouted—

"'Who's there? Is there any one there?'

"My question was answered by a soft chuckle, as if some one was laughing to himself. At first it was subdued, and then gradually it swelled into insane laughter.

"I admit that I was terrified by now. I was about to make for the dim light of the entrance when a figure sidled across it and barred my way. I knew at once that it was Stanhope.

"'Ah! so it's you?' I said stupidly.

"'Yes, it's I,' he chuckled slily. 'Been here quite a long time. You see, my tent blew away. No one pegged it down properly last night. . . . Had to come up here. Been expecting you for quite a long time.'

"'Expecting me?'

"'Certainly. I wanted to give you back that revolver you always carry about with you. You left it here last night, I think.'

"'Thank you,' I managed to answer him. I could see quite well that the insane pleasantness of his voice was gradually turning to a menacing seriousness. He was quite mad.

"'But before I return it to you, my dear young friend,'

he continued with a return of pleasantness, 'I want you to make acquaintance with the tomb-shaft. Charming pictures. And there's that interesting legend which you've never translated.'

"'I suggest another time,' I replied, trying to keep the fear out of my voice. 'You see, we haven't a light.'

"'Never mind about lights. You won't need a light when you get down there. A light! Ha! ha! ha! Splendid joke! .... But don't move,' he added in a harder tone as he saw me edge away from the shaft. 'I can see you plainly now. My eyes are accustomed to the darkness. And your revolver's loaded, mind.'

"Indeed, he had it pointing at me. Gradually he advanced towards me. I stood rooted to the floor. In another second I felt his hand grasp my left shoulder with the fury of madness, so that his nails dug through my shirt to the skin, and, what was infinitely more horrible, I felt the coldness of steel over my heart.

"'Now,' he muttered, his breath playing into my face, 'I'm going to push you down the tomb-shaft. Go on; move! I'll shoot you if you don't.'

"I was mesmerised with fear. Gradually he pushed me backwards towards the shaft.

"'Here we are,' he said with mad exultation. 'Now be ready. I'm going to give you a final push. You've got a fifty-feet drop, and then Amen-hotep can deal with you.'

"He gave me a violent shove. I remember wondering dimly as I spun backwards whether the fall would kill me straight-away or leave me to die slowly. I hoped to God it would kill me straight off. A second later I touched the floor of the tomb, and, realising that Stanhope had misjudged the position of the shaft, I jumped away into a corner and lay down.

"He, too, must have realised his mistake, for he started firing wildly. He had lost sight of me in the semi-darkness. The bullets ricochetted off the walls with dull pings. One fell harmlessly by me. The firing stopped for a moment, and he muttered to himself—

"'Where the bloody hell has the boy got to?'

"I thought he must be reloading, and looked up to see an electric torch probing into the corners. I knew that it was Abdul from the speed with which it was used.

"Suddenly it lit on Stanhope's figure.

"'There he is,' I shouted to Abdul. 'Push him down the tomb-shaft.'

"At that moment the instinct of self-preservation was too great for me, and though I believe now that I saw a sudden return of sanity, a sudden deep remorse on Stanhope's face in the momentary glow of the light as he turned towards it, I never stayed my command. Again and again I ask myself now, 'Was he sane at that

moment? Couldn't I have saved him, the best friend I ever had?' . . .

"Abdul was too quick for him, and must have taken him off his balance. The torch clattered to the floor. There was the sound of a short struggle, then a noise of rending material as the blanket covering the shaft yielded to Stanhope's weight. A stone placed on one of the corners of the blanket crashed down the shaft."

Here Lasserhayes put his face in his hands.

"D'you know," he said with great emotion, "I heard a kind of sob come up from the shaft as he fell; I shall never forget it. It will ring in my ears till I die. It was my Christian name, 'Dick.'"

X.

They buried Stanhope that evening on the top of the ridge above the tomb.

The expedition left Jeb'ail on camels sent up by the *sahas* the next day. The film of sand had vanished from the air, which seemed clearer and brighter than ever. The desert lay calm and unruffled as though no storm had ever passed over it. As they topped the fourth ridge from the descent into the Nile valley, Lasserhayes glanced round hurriedly. He saw the long, gently-swelling outlines of Jeb'ail. In the distance they had assumed a soft blue tinge, and made a peaceful contrast with the flaring carmine of the sunset beyond. He was reminded vividly of his first sight of the ridge four months before. An unquenchable ache besieged his heart as the camel took him back to civilisation. . . .

LE DOUX PAYS DE CHYPRE.

BY H. C. LUKE.

ἱκοίμαν ποτὶ Κύπρον
νᾶσον τᾶς Ἀφροδίτας,
ἵν' οἱ θελξίφρονες νέμον-
ται θνατοῖσιν Ἔρωτες,
. . . . . .
ἐκεῖσ' ἄγε με . . .
ἐκεῖ χάριτες, ἐκεῖ δὲ πόθος.

"Where is the home for me,
O Cyprus, set in the sea,
Aphrodite's home in the soft sea-foam,
Would I could wend to thee;
Where the wings of the Loves are furled,
And faint the heart of the world.
. . . . . .
O there is Grace, and there is the Heart's Desire,
And peace to adore thee, thou Spirit of Guiding Fire!"

ONE opinion as regards Cyprus is common to the mediæval French pilgrim, whose phrase gives a title to these pages, and to Euripides and his translator, Gilbert Murray. This Cyprus set in the sea is indeed a sweet land—

"Where the rainless meadows smile
With riches rolled from the hundred-fold
Mouths of the far-off Nile,"—

a fit dwelling-place for the Muses, a land meet to have given birth to laughter-loving Aphrodite. But while the meadows smile, the meadows which merge into the great central plain of the island, the Mesaoria, the "Land between the Mountains," what of the mountains themselves, the long serrated Kyrenia range which is the northern edge of Cyprus, and the more massive range in the south-western part of the island that culminates in Mount Troödos or Olympus? On their peaks and slopes and among their valleys there is scenery which, I maintain, cannot be surpassed elsewhere in colour, in romantic outline, in fragrance of vegetation. Although they are small when compared with the great ranges of the world, I claim for the mountains of Cyprus that they contain and are bounded by all that is most perfect in mountain-land and forest, sea and sky.

Leaving aside the towns and the Mesaoria, I would take the reader through the forest and hill country of Cyprus, beginning at Cape Andreas, the island's eastern extremity, then working westwards through the Karpass peninsula and the Kyrenia range to the Bay of Morphou; thence fetching a

circuit, which will embrace the Troödos forests and the peninsula of Akámas, rich in legend, to Paphos, beloved of Aphrodite. The time of year is early spring—early spring in Cyprus, be it understood,—namely, February, the month when the mountain streams come tumbling down the hillsides in full spate, when the oleander that fringes their banks is bursting into bloom, when in the foothills and plains the shy little winter narcissus is being replaced by the larger variety, when the woods and mountainsides are pink with cyclamen. At this time it is a delight to be about in Cyprus, to live "green days" in her forests and "blue days" by her shores; to wander with tent and mule among the more recondite beauty spots of an island of many beauties. The Karpass, that long and narrow peninsula which, projecting for forty miles beyond the rest of Cyprus, points like an index-finger at the Gulf of Alexandretta, is then blossoming out after the winter rains. From its base by the juniper forest of Vallia to its tip at Cape Andreas and its outposts, the Kleides Islands, it is a little paradise of undulating green, with hues that range from the tender colour of the young barley through the silvery gleam of the olive to the deeper tones of the mulberries in its plains and the cypresses on its hills. Its hills are the eastern continuation and end of the Kyrenia range, running with diminishing height but scarcely diminishing beauty to Land's End, which is the monastery of the Apostle Andrew, the islanders' favourite place of pilgrimage. Isolated from the rest of Cyprus by its remote situation, and containing, perhaps, among its population traces of Crusading stock, the Karpass, at one time the senior fief of feudal Cyprus, still differs from other parts of the island in its distinctive costume, distinctive customs, and a distinctive physical type: the Karpasitoi are without doubt the handsomest of the inhabitants of Cyprus, their clothes the most picturesque, their villages the neatest and most prosperous-looking.

Riding westward from the monastery, past the principal village of the peninsula, the scattered Rhizo Karpass, past Yialousa gleaming on the northern coast, past ample Heptakomé, we arrive at the first real eminences of the Kyrenia Mountains and at the first of the castles of the Lusignan Kings of Cyprus, which cling with astounding picturesqueness to their steepest and loftiest crags. There are three of these castles on the summits of the northern range, vying with one another in beauty and boldness of site; and between them nestle, unsuspected from below, such fairy-like spots as Khalevga and the forest of Qartal Dagh. And the names are almost as beautiful as the places. The most easterly of the castles, thickly overgrown by the spreading cypress pecu-

liar to this island, is Kantara, from whose walls you survey the Karpass to the east, the Mesaoria and the Bay of Famagusta to the south; and to the north, beyond the intervening sea, the snow-capped mountains of Asia Minor. Farther westward, beyond Homerically named Pentedactylos, the "five-fingered peak," comes impregnable Buffavento, rearing its turrets in defiance of the winds on the very summit of the ridge. Still farther to the west is S. Hilarion or Dieu d'Amour, also known in common with Buffavento and Kantara to the Turkish peasantry as *yüz bir ev*, a hundred and one houses, and to the Orthodox by its Greek equivalent of ἑκατὸν σπίτια. But before saying more of S. Hilarion, I would gladly halt for a moment at Khalevga, which is best reached from the village of Kythraea, fortunate possessor of a bountiful and perennial spring.

From Kythraea it is a ride of two hours along a mountain track to this delicious forest bower. First you pass the little plateau of Phylleri, rich in secular olive-trees and hidden from the view of the plain in a fold of the slopes of Pentedactylos. You then enter a narrow defile and emerge into a thickly-wooded glade of surpassing beauty, set astride the saddle of the ridge. This is Khalevga, beloved of the chosen few who know it as a place of pure delight, an enchanted nook well worthy of the "Enchanted Island." To the south lies spread below you the full expanse of the Mesaoria, with Troödos in the background, and in the foreground the white road winding its way into Nicosia, encompassed in its greenery. All this is pleasant enough; but to the north the view beggars description. On either hand the fantastic curves and precipitous slopes of the Kyrenia Mountains, capped with mediæval castles, delightfully wooded, infinitely varied, deeply indented by valleys red with oleander. Below them a narrow strip of fertile land, well covered with olive and caroub trees and dotted with prosperous villages glistening in the sunlight. Then forty miles of amaranthine sea, and finally the long line of the Karamanian Taurus, snow-clad and majestic. And what of Khalevga itself, whence all this may be seen? A green paradise, cool and redolent of pine and cypress and wild myrtle and a hundred fragrant woodland shrubs, nestling against the peak of Qartal Dagh, the home, as its name implies in Turkish, of innumerable eagles. Around you, all covered with boscage, are lesser crags, where the wood-pigeons have their haunt; at your feet a carpet of ranunculus and anemones, wild hyacinth and violets and sweet-scented cyclamen. It is a place of quiet, undisturbed by human habitation other than the forest hut that gives you shelter. Faintly in the distance you may hear the

tinkle of the flocks going to pasture, or the deeper note of the threefold bell of the camels crossing the ridge, laden with fuel. Else all is peace. A mile below you is the one touch which the hand of man has contributed to this idyll—an Armenian monastery of the fifteenth century ensconced in a valley overlooking the sea. But S. Macarius contributes to, rather than detracts from, the prevailing atmosphere; none there are busy except the bees, who make the honey for which the place is famous. The grey walls of this ancient retreat, pierced by narrow Gothic windows, are truly in keeping with the Kyrenia Mountains, that perfect blend of sylvan beauties and mediæval art.

A delicious place in spring, I am not sure that Khalevga is not yet more enthralling in winter. In spring there are the flowers and the young green, rosy-fingered dawn and nacreous twilight; but in winter there is something about these mountains that appeals, to me at least, even more forcibly than vernal charms. Snow falls but rarely on the Kyrenia Mountains, but, even so, the cold exhilarating winter weather makes it a joy to be alive; and you can see as much snow as you want on Troödos and on the mountains of Karamania across the strait. In the afternoon Scotch mists climb slowly along the chain of mountain-tops, and as they gather round Qartal Dagh and his fellows, cloak them in a shroud of mystery. And in the evening, after a long day's tramp over the hills to the village of Khartja, or to the crumbling monastery of Antiphonétissa, you return to a roaring fire of olive wood and pine-cones on the stoep of the forest-hut, and, well content, sip a glass of the fragrant liqueur brewed by the monks of Kykko.

Of the three castles on the summit of the range, it is difficult to say which is the most beautiful. In site as in architecture all three are fantastic, improbable, unreal, too ethereal, too fairy-like, to seem anything but the castles of dreamland or of a mirage. Buffavento, whose very name is pure romance, has the most challenging position, but is the least well preserved. Kantara, best seen from the north, where its turrets tower two thousand feet above the coast, has the noblest views, with the sea to the north and south of it; to the west the semicircle of the Kyrenia range sweeping with its line of jagged mountain-tops into the dim blue distance of Cape Kormakiti; to the east its saw-like ridge dropping with graceful *diminuendo* towards Cape Andreas. On the whole, perhaps, S. Hilarion is the most picturesque, for it was not only, like the other two, a stronghold intended as a place of refuge in times of stress, but was also the summer retreat, the Windsor, of the Kings and Queens of the House

of Lusignan. The tilting-ground, where the nobles jousted on their scarlet-tailed chargers, is easily discernible in the hollow below the barbican; and from the mullioned windows of the "Queen's Lodging" you may still look past Karmi village upon one of the fairest landscapes in the world. Nay more, S. Hilarion is connected with the oldest of Cyprian myths. The early history of Cyprus is lost in the mists of antiquity; but there is reason to believe that Aphrodite, by all accounts a goddess of discernment, rose from the sea on the drifts of white foam which to this day are borne by the breeze on to the rocky shore of Paphos; and that, having chosen this delectable island for her realm, she further selected the castle of Dieu d'Amour in which to give birth to her son Eros. It is true that the antiquary will find little in the existing buildings to confirm this belief; and there are pedants callous enough to maintain that Dieu d'Amour is a Frankish corruption of Didymos, which, they say, was the ancient name of the twin crests now occupied by the castle. If we grant, however, that Eros was born somewhere, then, clearly, S. Hilarion, or Dieu d'Amour, or Didymos (let us not quarrel with the pedants), must have been the place. And as Cyprus is a land of bees, here, probably, was the scene of the disaster of which Anacreon sings in the ode beginning—

Ἔρως ποτ' ἐν ῥόδοισιν
κοιμωμένην μέλιτταν
οὐκ εἶδεν· ἀλλ' ἐτρώθη
τὸν δάκτυλον.

S. Hilarion overlooks, in the strip of land at the foot of the northern slope of the mountains, one of the most charming regions of Cyprus. Here the olive and caroub trees are ampler than elsewhere, the verdure richer; elsewhere the cyclamen "never blows so red." It has been well said that, while there is a certain austerity about the rest of Cyprus, the Kyrenia coast recalls the richness of Italy. True, this narrow strip of country between the mountains and the sea resembles Italy, but that Italy which is half Greece both in name and speech and scene—Magna Græcia; even more does it resemble certain regions of Sicily. Here, as at Girgenti and in the parts about Táranto, sea and sky are of a sharp clear blue, olives silvery, cypresses of the deepest green. Anemone and cyclamen carpet the ground, gladiolus and wild iris mingle with the growing corn, rosemary and thyme and cistus perfume the air. Beneath a stone-pine the neatherd plays the pan-pipe to his flock—plays doleful strains in the Dorian mode; from the myrtle-scented hillside is heard, as if in echo, the cadence of the peasant's *mélopée*—

ἐκεῖ χάριτες, ἐκεῖ δὲ πόθος.

Here might Theocritus have sought inspiration for his idylls no less than in his Syracusan

groves and in his mossy glades beside the Anapus; here, by a spring half-veiled with fern, have sung of Daphnis and Menalcas and rustic loves.

Below Hilarion lies the pretty seaport of Kyrenia, in whose massive castle the daughter of the only Emperor of Cyprus sought refuge from Richard Cœur de Lion, and Queen Charlotte, the last legitimate sovereign of the House of Lusignan, held out for four years against her bastard brother James. Three miles to the east is the Abbey of Bella Paise, in all likelihood the most important as well as the most beautiful monument of the Latin East; to the west, Lapethos with its monastery of Acheiropoietos, dedicated to the image of Christ "not wrought by the hand of man." A little beyond Lapethos, tucked away in the north-west corner of the island, are the four villages inhabited for centuries by colonies of Maronites from the Lebanon; above them lies the monastery of Myrtou, at one time the seat of the Bishops of Kyrenia. Of the beauties of Bella Paise it is beyond my powers to give an adequate description: paints and not phrases are the medium for the purpose. In a delightful paper on "Some Aspects of Cyprus," Sir Anton Bertram has compared Bella Paise with Tintern; but with what can Tintern match the sweeping curve of mountains, the blue sea and distant Asian ranges, the groves of oranges and lemons, and the stone-work tinged with gold?

Of a different kind are the attractions of the mountains which occupy most of the south-western part of the island. Their summits, higher but less abrupt than those of the Kyrenia Mountains, are covered with fragrant pine forests, not with castles; no Gothic abbeys lurk in their deep and rugged valleys. In the Kyrenia Mountains nature and art compete with the happiest results; in the others, only a humble Byzantine mountain church, with its peculiar timber roof, seconds, here and there, the efforts of nature. The culmination of this mountainous region—it can hardly be called a range—is one of the Olympi of antiquity—

> Πιερία μούσειος ἕδρα,
> σεμνὰ κλιτὺς Ὀλύμπου,

now Mount Troödos, the summer station of the Cyprus Government and the troops. Troödos, to quote Sir Anton Bertram, is all "pine-trees, bracken, and red earth, and beneath you, wherever you look, is an undescribable view, to which distance lends the proverbial quality of enchantment." Over to the north-west you look towards the wild and densely-wooded region of Tylliria, last refuge of the sect of Linobambakoi (Flax-cottons or Linsey-woolseys), who compromise between Christianity and Islam by keeping the names and ceremonies of both faiths. Towards the south,

where the salt-lake of Limasol glimmers in the distance six thousand feet below, you overlook mountains and foothills covered with vineyards; for Cyprus produces much wine, and some of its vintages have become famous. Of these is the dessert wine known as *Comanderia*, because produced from vineyards which once were part of the Grand Commandery of the Knights of S. John in Cyprus. An old French belief ascribes to this same region the origin of champagne; and as the story is little known, I may perhaps be allowed to tell it here. In the thirteenth century Thibaut IV., Count of Champagne, returning from a Crusade, stopped in the island on his homeward journey to visit his cousin, Queen Alice of Cyprus. During his sojourn in the island a young noble of the King's Court was condemned to death for having stolen by night into the apartments of the Queen's Ladies, among whom was his betrothed. Count Thibaut, as befitted a Troubadour prince, looked indulgently on offences of this kind, and begged that the life of the guilty one might be spared. His request was granted on the condition that he took the offender with him to Champagne; and in due course Thibaut, accompanied by his protégé, arrived at his castle of Troyes. But soon the young swain fell ill of pining for his sweetheart, and the tender-hearted Count sent him back to Cyprus, bidding him marry his lady and return with her to Champagne. More than a year elapsed, and the Count began to think that his friend had forgotten him, when a young man and woman were announced at the castle gate, seeking admittance.

They were the knight and his lady, now happily wedded, and bringing from Cyprus gifts in token of their gratitude to the Count. The damsel's offering was a rose-bush, which has produced the sweet-smelling rose of Provins; that of the young man was a bunch of cuttings from the best vines of Olympus, which, as they multiplied on the chalky cliffs of the Marne, gave the wine of champagne to France.

A sunset from Troödos over Panagia Hill and Paphos is a spectacle not to be forgotten. As seen from the white rock of Asprókremnos, it is for all the world like the sunset of a Japanese print. The *Laricio* pines, their tops stunted and deformed by the masses of snow under which they are weighted throughout the winter, have assumed dwarfed and fantastic shapes which, together with their deep green — far deeper than that of the Aleppo pine of the lower levels,—contrasted with the equally deep crimson of the rapidly sinking sun, produce effects in colouring and design such as are seen in the works of Hiroshige. The wild valleys that run down to the south-west, Stavros and Ayiá, are the haunts of the vanishing and elusive moufflon,

only survivor of the bigger game of Cyprus. And as you emerge from the dense forest of Stavros into the open hill country of Lyso, where are grown what I am sure are the best figs in the world, you see before you the glorious sweep of Chrysochou Bay; bounded on the north by the rugged ridge of the Troödos *massif* as it dips down to the sea at Pomos Point, on the south by the green and gentle slopes that end in the romantic peninsula of Akámas. In this delicious forest-tract, now inhabited only by game-birds, Aphrodite wedded Acamas; here, in a spot that is all deep shadows and ferns, is the Cypriote peasant's Βρύσις τῶν Ἐρωτῶν, Ariosto's Fount of Love:—

"Dal mar sei miglia o sette; a poco a poco
Si va salendo inverso il colle ameno.
Mirti e cedri e naranci e lauri il loco,
E mille altri soavi arbori han pieno,
Serpillo e persa e rose e gigli e croco
Spargon dall' odorifero terreno
Tanta suavità, ch' in mar sentire
La fa ogni vento che da terra spire.

Da limpida fontana tutta quella
Piaggia rigando va un ruscel fecondo.
Ben si può dir che sia di Vener bella
Il luogo dilettevole e giocondo;
Che v'è ogni donna affatto, ogni donzella
Piacevol più ch' altrove sia nel mondo:
E fa la Dea che tutte ardon d' amore,
Giovani e vecchie, infino all' ultim' ore."

And so let us close this little pilgrimage, riding along the fertile coastland into Paphos, with the note of the conch-shell blown by the camel-drivers in this part of Cyprus ringing in our ears, and the fragrance of the wild herbs, marjoram and balsam, basil and rosemary, perfuming the air around us.

"O there is Grace, and there is the Heart's Desire,
And peace to adore thee, thou Spirit of Guiding Fire!"

MURDER DISQUALIFIES.

BY ALAN GRAHAM.

CHAPTER V.

DORNING is the prettiest village in Scotland. Other villages lay claim to this distinction, but their charms are of a different character, depending upon extraneous things, such as mountains or lochs or other natural objects for which the claimant cannot rightly demand credit. Dorning relies upon no scenery. It has none. It is situated in low-lying country, inland a mile or so from the Firth of Forth, snuggling itself within a belt of trees that shade its cottages from the sun in summer, and blunt the edge of the east winds that blow from the sea during the greater part of the year.

Dorning has a railway station, but it keeps it at arm's length—fully a mile from the village, and not even the echo of the shriek of a whistle disturbs the sleepy silence that hovers over the village green. This exclusiveness is due to the fact that the family of Rintoul has reigned over Dorning for many generations, and is intensely proud of the village and jealous of innovation. They have been good landlords, the Rintouls, and it stands to their credit, and to theirs alone, that Dorning is the prettiest village in Scotland.

The cottages nestle round the village green—a long isosceles triangle of velvet turf where the tenants' cows browse peacefully under the care of an ancient pensioner—peeping out brightly from well-kept shrubberies fenced off by low green palings. Two sides of the triangle are thus wooded and green, the third is a high old stone wall, turreted and battlemented, which encloses the picturesque ruins of Dorning Castle. The Rintouls have tended the ruins well, kept the policies and gardens in good condition, so that Dorning Castle is considered one of the sights of the county.

Dorning House, the modern seat of the family, known to the tenants as the "Big Hoose," lies behind the castle, between the village and the sea. The little river Loun flows through the grounds, and the house was built more than a century ago in a loop of the river, so that three sides of it are surrounded as by a moat. The house, though large, has little claim to architectural beauty, but it is sound and comfortable, and its gardens and grounds, laid

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out by dead and gone Rintouls with considerable taste, give it a grace that atones for the lack of beauty in the actual building.

Beyond lies the Firth of Forth, with the little island of Meath lying as though just anchored, half a mile from the sandy beach. Meath, rocky and uninhabited, is in the parish of Dorning, and, like all the rest of the parish, is a Rintoul possession.

If one walks to the apex of the village triangle whose base is the wall of Dorning Castle, one comes upon the Rintoul Arms, the unique inn of Dorning, and, leaving the green and following down a wooded lane, one reaches the Parish Kirk, with the manse close by, hidden amongst the trees.

Here, upon the afternoon of the day on which Neil McNeil entered into the service of Francesca Marinetti, the subject of the Rintoul inheritance was under discussion, though under vastly different circumstances.

To begin with, it was behind a locked door, not on account of the secrecy of the subject—the dead Laird's will was the talk of the village—but because the minister's wife was smoking a cigarette.

Mrs Murdoch bore a strong resemblance to a one-man band, in that she smoked her cigarette, suckled her child, kept an ear cocked against the approach of footsteps in the passage without, and carried on an animated conversation with the remaining occupant of the room. It is hardly necessary to state, in the face of such evidence of versatility, that the minister's wife had held an eminent position upon the musical comedy stage before her marriage.

"Jean," she was saying at the moment of the introduction, "I believe you and Old Bill are leaving me out of something. If there's going to be any excitement I *won't* be left out."

The girl to whom she spoke sat in a low chair, absorbed but shy.

She was a charming girl. Not, perhaps, strictly beautiful, but with such an engaging expression and distinction of appearance that ninety-nine men out of a hundred would have straightened their ties and preened themselves at sight of her. The hundredth man would have been misogynic or myopic. She was small and slender, yet gracefully formed, and her face was alive with changing expression. Her hair was of a rich deep shade of brown, arranged demurely with a central parting, and dressed low over her ears. This quakerish simplicity gave an added piquancy to her dainty face.

She laughed prettily at her friend's protest.

"You and your 'Old Bill,'" she said lightly. "One of these days you will forget yourself and call him 'Old Bill' to Mrs Anderson at the post office, and both your reputations will be gone. How could the elders be expected to retain their

reverence for the minister if they knew that his wife called him 'Old Bill,' and what would they think of the depravity of a woman who could take such a liberty? In fact, Clarice, you must be the poorest attempt at a minister's wife that ever was. You're far too much like a human woman."

"I'm sorry," laughed the other. "I've had so little practice. Perhaps it will come with time. As it is, I live in a perpetual state of panic. Thank the Lord, Old Bill doesn't mind. There you are, you see. I suppose I shouldn't thank the Lord for little things like that, but I'm *so* grateful. But suppose we give my shortcomings a rest. I believe you only brought them up to drag like a red herring across the track. What have you and the minister been concocting behind my back? I saw you together in the garden this morning deep in something, and I'm sure it was the estate."

She pointed her cigarette accusingly at Jean Rintoul with one hand, while she held Young Bill to her breast with the other.

"Of course we were talking about the estate," admitted the girl. "Mr Murdoch thinks of nothing else. I believe it will come out like a rash all over his sermons if it isn't settled soon. I look on my chance as a forlorn hope, but he won't admit it. Does he not talk about the Rintoul inheritance in his sleep, Clarice?"

"He'll hardly talk of it at all to me. You see, he has theories about the upbringing of children, and he thinks that any unusual excitement might —well, reduce the nourishment in Young Bill's food supply. I tell him it's rot, and that Young Bill's food supply can very safely be left in my hands; but he's frightfully pig-headed like all you Scotch people, only you like to call it *dour* and be proud of it. So, you see, if there are any plots and schemes afoot, I shall have to count on you to tell me about them, Jean, for I *won't* be left out."

"And then I shall be in the minister's black books," said Jean Rintoul. "Still, I'm no more afraid of him than you are, Clarice. He's one of those bulldog-looking men who will eat out of one's hand. I've never seen a man so henpecked in my life."

Mrs Murdoch laughed.

"You call it henpecked," she said, "but that's simply because you don't understand Old Bill. He says he is a philosopher, which means that as long as he doesn't care about things *too* much any one can have their own way, but when it's a matter of principle every one must have his way. That's why I am feeding Young Bill myself. His father thinks bottles are irreligious."

"I believe you are right," agreed Jean. "He's too lazy to bother about little things."

"Not lazy—broad-minded," retorted Mrs Murdoch, who said many things about her husband

that she would not accept from another.

"Very well, broad-minded be it," Jean acquiesced with a smile of understanding. "His plan for getting possession of Dorning House for me is certainly broad-minded—for a minister of the Church of Scotland."

"Then there is a plan! Tell me."

Young Bill had dropped asleep with repletion or with the exhaustion attendant upon his labours, and Mrs Murdoch dislodged him gently, adjusted her attire, and placed the unconscious child carefully in his cradle, after which she inhaled a great draught of smoke and blew it out in a long sigh of satisfaction.

"Tell me, Jean," she repeated.

"There is very little to tell," said her friend. "We've thought and thought, and talked and talked, and the whole result of it all is that Mr Murdoch proposes that he should be at the front door of Dorning House long before daylight on the morning when the competition begins. I am to ride up on my bicycle, timing myself to arrive exactly at sunrise. If either of my rivals tries to interfere he will knock them down while I ring the bell for old Ronald. Once I am in, he says, I am safe. No one can dislodge me."

"Isn't that just like Old Bill!" cried his wife, her pretty face alight with amusement. "No wonder he joined the army as a Tommy instead of as a padre. He just loves fighting. But isn't one of your rivals a girl?"

"Yes. My Aunt Kate's daughter. Her father was a Corsican, and my aunt ran away with him. I never saw her, and, of course, I have never seen my cousin, though I have seen pictures of her several times in the papers. She is quite a celebrity, and as she is singing in London now, she will probably have a shot at the inheritance. Judging by her portraits, she is too dreamy and unpractical to have much of a chance. The real danger is Uncle Rufus."

"So I have gathered. He is rather a desperado, isn't he?"

"I don't know what to say," replied Jean, her brows knit in quite an attractive frown. "I always liked him when I was little. He is a bold, dashing kind of man, and from the hints my father and mother used to let drop, I think he used to get badly into debt and expect the rest of the family to get him out. Uncle Robert used to call him the greatest scoundrel unhung, but that might mean very little, for Uncle Robert was an extremist in words. Whatever else he may be, Uncle Rufus is no coward. He was over age, but he joined the Sportsmen's Battalion, got a commission, and I heard that he saw any amount of service. What hope have I against a man like him?"

"Don't worry, dear. Old Bill will knock him down if he says he will."

Jean shook her head ruefully. "I doubt if that treatment will be successful with Uncle Rufus," she said. "I think he is too cunning to give Mr Murdoch a chance, and even if he did—my uncle is as big and strong as the minister. I have very little hope."

"The whole thing's a scandal," said Mrs Murdoch hotly. "Why couldn't old Mr Rintoul leave everything to you decently, and not make a fool of himself publicly after he was dead? I don't understand you Scotch people with your silly family squabbles. You should all be publicly smacked."

She took a little case from her pocket and extracted another cigarette, which she lit from the stump of the old one, throwing the latter into the heart of the fire and carefully observing its incineration. One had to take precautions.

"I don't know why I should be publicly smacked," protested Jean Rintoul. "I'm only a victim."

In this contention she had the support of practically the whole population of Dorning, where the late Laird's will, and the chances of his three descendants, were canvassed eagerly. Jean Rintoul was well known and popular amongst them; her Uncle Rufus hardly so well known but notoriously unpopular; while Francesca Marinetti was merely a name to which a certain legend of scandal was still attached.

Jean was well known because she had lived in Dorning ever since the death of her mother some years before. Her father had died when she was a child, and his widow and daughter had lived comfortably enough on what he had left to them in a little house in Edinburgh. On the death of her mother—to the surprise of every one who knew him—her Uncle Robert had come forward with the offer of a home to the orphaned girl, and she had lived with him at Dorning House until his death.

The tenants, and indeed every one who was acquainted with the circumstances, had taken it for granted that Laird Rintoul intended to make her his heiress, and it came as a terrible shock to the village when the contents of the will were made known. Perhaps the girl herself was least surprised of any, because she knew her uncle best. After the funeral she packed her belongings philosophically and went off to stay with friends in Edinburgh, where she remained until a few days before the conversation recorded.

When the Reverend William Murdoch—Captain Murdoch he had the right to call himself—returned to his parish with the young wife whom he had found in a canteen in France, Jean Rintoul had quickly become a constant visitor at the manse, and an intimate friend of the minister's wife, who, as a mere

Southron, and a flighty one at that, was looked at somewhat askance by her husband's parishioners. Perhaps, amongst the young and single of her own sex, envy was at the root of their stand-offishness. The young minister had been much sought after by the daughters of the neighbouring gentleman-farmers before the war had called him away.

It was natural, therefore, that when she returned to Dorning towards the end of the three months' interval after her uncle's death, Jean Rintoul should be the guest of the manse.

"You're right. You are a victim," agreed Mrs Murdoch with emphasis. "I suppose speaking ill of the dead is one of the things that no minister's wife ever does, but there are so many that I forget. I'll take the risk. I think your uncle was just the meanest, cantankerousest, stupidest old man who ever lived. He had no spite against you. He treated you as his own daughter. Every action of his led you to believe——"

"No, Clarice, you mustn't say that," Jean interrupted. "He never once said a word that gave me any reason to expect that he would leave anything to me. And you mustn't call him all these names, because I liked Uncle Robert. He was always very good to me, although he could be short-tempered at times. He was a man with rather a curious dry sense of humour, and I think his will is just an elaborate joke. Perhaps it didn't occur to him how different it would appear after he was dead."

Clarice Murdoch blew a scornful cloud of smoke from her pretty lips.

"Then it ought to have occurred to him," she said emphatically. "He had no interest in any of his relations but you. They tell me—hush!"

She bent forward in a listening attitude, then rose quickly and threw her half-smoked cigarette into the fire, pressing it into the heart of the glow with the poker. Then she tiptoed to the door and silently turned back the lock. A moment later she was back in her chair, bending solicitously over the cradle in which lay the innocent and unconscious Young Bill.

"At least he shan't catch me this time," she whispered over her shoulder, the light of mischief in her eyes.

"Do you think he has no nose?" asked Jean Rintoul scornfully.

"Smells are not evidence," retorted the minister's wife.

As the handle of the door turned, the cradle began to rock gently, and the Reverend William Murdoch entered to find his young wife bending over their child, a look of motherly solicitude in her eyes.

CHAPTER VI.

The Reverend William Murdoch was a tall burly man of about thirty-five, who had more the appearance of a prosperous farmer than of a cleric. A big drooping brown moustache, combined with the name that his parents had given him at birth, was the origin of the pet name by which his wife addressed him—a name which occasioned him both amusement and alarm. If Annie, the servant, should overhear it—only once—Dorning would be afire with it from end to end within four hours.

He was a pleasant man to look at, the minister. His eyes were kindly, and ready to smile at the slightest provocation. He smiled mostly with his eyes, for his mouth was veiled by the moustache, and he was rarely known to laugh, his humour being of that dry nature which depends so much upon its solemnity. He had many a good joke to himself that his elders never even suspected.

The minister entered sniffing.

"It's thick in here—very," he said, his eyes a-twinkle.

"The chimney's been smoking," said his wife mendaciously.

"Aye?" said the minister inquiringly. "It's powerful strong smoke for a chimney. What's your fuel—woodbine?"

"Apple logs—they're very pungent," replied his wife, and with a raised hand added, "Sh! You'll wake Young Bill, and I've just got him asleep."

"I'm all against chimneys that smoke," said the Reverend William in a lower tone. "Particularly ministers' chimneys. It's against the whole tradition o' the Kirk o' Scotland."

"Ah, well, our chimney must be a dissenter," retorted Mrs Murdoch, who, by force of association, was beginning to acquire certain ecclesiastical terms.

Jean Rintoul laughed merrily.

"Oh, you two sillies," she cried. "With your everlasting back-chat. One would think you were continually at cross-purposes if one did not know the exact opposite. I know, Mr Murdoch, you keep a supply of cigarettes in the house, although you scorn to smoke them yourself, and you buy more when they go done. Do you think I don't know who you buy them for?"

"Sh!" Mrs Murdoch admonished her guest. "For Heaven's sake, child, keep up appearances."

The Reverend William Murdoch looked self-conscious, not to say sheepish, and quickly changed the subject.

"I've been up at the Big Hoose to see Ronald Aitken," he said casually. "He's a close one is Ronald."

"He is a dear old thing when you know him," said Jean Rintoul, "but he takes a lot of knowing. I believe he

is quite fond of me, but since the will was made public he has treated me like a stranger. He takes his responsibilities as umpire very seriously, I think, and is afraid of showing favouritism. What excuse did you make for calling on him?"

"Excuse! What excuse does a minister need for visiting one of his own elders?" replied Murdoch. "But I learnt nothing. On all matters of dogma he would talk by the hour, but the mere mention of the dead Laird made him close up like an oyster. My visit served one useful purpose, however. It reminded me that there are two entrances to the grounds of the Big Hoose, and that there is a back door as well as a front door. To take possession without the risk of some one else getting in first won't be so simple as I thought, for while we're knocking at the front door, your Uncle Rufus may be sneaking in by the back."

"But can't you persuade this old man to open the front door first?" suggested his wife. "What's the use of being a parish minister if you can't manage your own elders?"

"I know Ronald," said Jean, with a shake of her pretty head. "You might as well try to persuade the Bass Rock. He will follow out his old master's instructions to the letter, no matter where his sympathies may be. It's awfully kind of you to try to help me, Mr Murdoch, but I'm afraid I have no chance. Uncle Rufus will be too much for us."

"The whole thing is a disgrace," declared the minister hotly. "The estate is morally yours, Jean, and I won't rest until it is legally yours as well. The idea that a rank waster like Rufus Rintoul should—but there, we'll be upsetting Clarice, and the bairn will suffer."

"Rats," replied that cultured matron. "You're absolutely ridiculous, Bill. As if I'd let the Dorning inheritance interfere with my natural functions! I insist on knowing all about everything. You needn't try to keep me in the dark, for I shall get it all out of Jean."

Murdoch walked to the cradle and bent over its sleeping occupant.

"He looks all right," he said fondly. "But we must take no risks."

"Risks!" repeated his wife scornfully. "If you aren't jolly careful, and take me into all your plans, I'll jib, and bring him up on the bottle."

"A pestilential system!" exclaimed the Reverend William. "Apart altogether from the unnecessary expense, it stands to reason that the child will thrive better on natural food than emergency rations."

"Then you must just humour his mother," declared that lady. "What are you going to do to help Jean?"

"Anything that a minister of the gospel can justifiably do." He hesitated, and went on explosively: "And maybe a

trifle over. It makes me wild to think of that hell-raking ne'er-do-well, that never moved a finger for the Rintouls all the days of his ill-spent life, stepping into his brother's shoes at the expense of Jean, who made the old man's last years pleasant to him."

"It's funny that you should be so down on Uncle Rufus when I have quite pleasant recollections of him," said Jean. "I remember he used to visit us when I was quite a little girl. He used to play with me, and he always gave me half a crown when he left."

"Aye, I daresay," replied the minister. "And he could well afford it, for as like as not he had borrowed two or three hundred of them from your father just before. Though I've never met him myself, I've heard plenty about his goings on, and he's no credit to the family. If I can help to keep him out of Dorning House I'll be doing something to be proud of."

"Can't you think of anything better than the knocking-down scheme that Jean has been telling me of?" asked his wife. "I don't think it does you credit."

"I've been racking my brains all the way back, but without the least effect," admitted the Reverend William. "The only thing I'm clear on is that I can't deal with both drives and both doors by myself. I shall have to find an ally, and that's not easy for a minister. His congregation expect him to be so circumspect, and Dorning beats the wireless for gossip.'

"I think I could find a few loyal supporters in the village," said Jean, "if you think it's worth while opposing Uncle Rufus."

"Worth while! Of course it's worth while."

"Well, there's Rab Wilson for one."

"What? The poacher?" exclaimed the minister. "A man that never comes near the kirk, but spends all his spare time in the Rintoul Arms, though nobody knows where he gets the money that he spends there!"

"He wears the D.C.M. and the M.M.," replied Jean hotly. "And he has never been *convicted* of poaching, and I *have* known ministers of the Church of Scotland that like a drop of hot toddy at bed-time—and have it too!"

Mrs Murdoch laughed merrily.

"Old Bill, you're stung," she cried gleefully. "We shall see you and Jean's other friend whispering together in corners soon, and then the elders will say you have taken to poaching."

"There's plenty of time yet before we take any one into our confidence," said her husband. "The immediate need is to devise a plan of campaign. A pipe in the study will maybe help. . . ."

Within three days the Reverend William Murdoch made the acquaintance of Rufus Rin-

toul. The latter's niece, Jean, was standing at the parlour window after dinner — which was at one o'clock, notwithstanding Mrs Murdoch's efforts to introduce her Southron ways —looking out upon the April sunshine, the fresh green leaflets bursting on the boughs and the few spring flowers that stood out so boldly in the general bareness, when she became aware of a tall figure striding up the gravelled drive arrayed in the baggy knickerbockers which are known in golfing circles as "plus-fours." At a second glance she recognised him.

"Oh!" she cried, drawing back hastily from the window. 'Here comes my Uncle Rufus! What can he want?"

"Rufus Rintoul!" exclaimed Murdoch, joining her, and peering out through the old-fashioned lace curtains. "So that's him, is it? He's a fine man—to look at."

A few moments later Annie's voice was heard in the hall, followed by the tread of heavy feet. A door closed.

"Please," said Annie, her head round the parlour door, "it's Mr Rintoul. I've pit him in the study, an' he says he wants tae speak wi' his niece—that's you, miss."

"Thank you, Annie."

As the door closed once more, the three occupants of the parlour looked at one another undecidedly.

"Will you see him?" asked the minister.

"Do you think I should?"

"Of course you should see him," advised Mrs Murdoch. "You want to know anything you can of his plans."

"And as we have none ourselves, he can't learn much by his visit," added the Reverend William.

"Come along then, Mr Murdoch. You must back me up."

Rufus Rintoul rose as they entered and advanced to his niece with outstretched hand.

"I can hardly believe it," he said, looking at her admiringly. "You make an old man of me, lassie. And how are you?"

Jean shook hands nervously.

"How do you do, Uncle Rufus? You don't really look a day older," she said. "This is Mr Murdoch, whose guest I am."

Rufus Rintoul bowed stiffly, and his green eyes turned on the minister with a hint of hostility.

"Good-day to you, sir," he said. "I'll not say I'm pleased to meet you for two reasons. The first is, my call is of a business nature, and concerns none but my niece and myself, and the second is that I never was partial to your cloth."

"You're plain-spoken, sir," said Murdoch.

"I'm famous for it," retorted Rintoul composedly.

"Please, Uncle Rufus," said Jean, laying her hand beseechingly on her uncle's arm, "don't let us quarrel. Mr Murdoch has been very kind to me. He is entirely in my confidence, and I asked him to come with

me to hear what you have to say."

She looked charming as she stood with her delicate chin uptilted, making her appeal for peace.

Rintoul hesitated for a moment, then, with a shrug of his broad shoulders, said—

"Have it your own way, but if you prefer clerical advice to lay, you're not a real Rintoul. I've come about that mad will of my brother's. There's no question but we can settle it amicably between ourselves. I have little doubt—none at all, to be candid—that I can fulfil the conditions of the will, but I have no wish to be hard on my own blood, Jean, so I'm going to make you an offer. I'm willing to allow you five hundred pounds a year for life if you'll give up all claim to the estate. With the bit you have already you'll be more than comfortable."

"In plain words, Mr Rintoul, you would have your niece sell her birthright for a mess of pottage," said the minister.

"In plain words, Mr Parson, I would like to hear what my niece has got to say for herself," replied Rufus Rintoul offensively.

"I may tell you, Jean," he went on, turning his shoulder to Murdoch, "that this offer is just pure natural generosity. I'm notorious for it. You can have no hope of winning the estate for yourself, so you'd best just thank me prettily and sign the paper I've brought."

"Have you made this offer to my cousin, Francesca Marinetti?" asked Jean.

"I have," replied her uncle.

"And has she accepted it?"

"Have you ever seen Francesca Marinetti?"

"Only a picture of her," replied Jean.

"If you'd seen her you wouldn't need to ask. She's a mad woman," declared Rintoul.

"Mad!" exclaimed Jean in shocked surprise.

"Oh, not asylum mad, but just plain daft," explained her uncle. "*She'd* never look at any plain proposition. Now, you are a sensible Scotch lass, and I'm confident you'll see which side your bread is buttered. Read the terms for yourself."

He pulled out a legal-looking document, and offered it to Jean.

She shook her head and drew herself away a little.

"No, thank you, Uncle Rufus," she said quietly. "I don't need to look at it. I haven't the least intention of signing it."

"Good lass!" cried the minister enthusiastically. "We'll have the estate or nothing, and it'll not be my fault if it's nothing."

Rufus Rintoul's green eyes rested shrewdly on his niece. His strong face showed no sign of disappointment or annoyance. He ignored the minister's outburst.

"I'll make no attempt to persuade you," he said quietly.

"I'm a Rintoul myself. I think, in your own quiet way, you're as daft as your cousin. I'll just warn you of one thing. When I'm the Laird, don't waste your breath asking me for favours. You've had your chance and refused it."

"Don't be afraid, uncle. I shan't whine if I lose," replied Jean. "And I shan't crow until I've won," she added slyly.

"A wise policy in the circumstances. You'll be seeing your Corsican cousin shortly, I'm thinking. I've reason to believe the accommodation in Dorning will hardly meet the strain on it when her forces arrive. We'll be living in strenuous times shortly. Well, there's nothing more to be said. Good-day to you, Jean. Come and see me this day fortnight at the Big Hoose. You shall have a glass of wine and a biscuit. And you, my reverend enemy, would be well advised to stick to your last."

"I'm not a cobbler," replied the minister drily. "I'm a man who has put his hand to the plough. We'll see which of us two can drive the straighter furrow."

"It's a challenge," said Rintoul. "And I warn you, when I'm Laird, you can let the Dorning House sitting to the devil if you like. I'll never want it."

"Then we'll let it lie idle," retorted the minister. "For with all due respect to the devil, I doubt if he would be much more of an ornament to the Kirk than yourself."

Rufus Rintoul smiled grimly, for the retort was much in his own vein.

"I'll give you best at repartee, Mr Murdoch," he said. "And bid you good-afternoon —and a last warning not to cross my path. . . ."

"I'm glad I've seen him," said the Reverend William when they had watched Rufus Rintoul's broad back vanish down the drive. "He's a formidable enemy, and it's well to know just what we're up against."

"I wonder what he meant when he spoke of Cousin Francesca's forces," said Jean thoughtfully.

"Trying to frighten you and bluff you into signing his precious document," said the minister. "Jean, since I've seen that cold-blooded ruffian I'm more determined than ever to see that you have your rights. I'll even take your Rab Wilson as an ally if it's going to help your cause."

CHAPTER VII.

Neil McNeil, notwithstanding the poor show he had made in Rufus Rintoul's flat, was no fool. During the days that followed, he was much in the society of Francesca Marinetti, and learnt to adapt himself to her varying moods, to pander

to her whims, and to make himself indispensable to her plans. The more he saw her, the more deeply did her fascination sink into him. Whatever there was of the grotesque in her mannerisms, however much her strange tastes and habits might jar upon him, her rich beauty and real queenliness carried off triumphantly.

She was a woman of extremes in everything. Untidy and careless of her dress in the seclusion of her flat—McNeil would arrive to find her perhaps stockingless and with her wonderful hair in a loose touzled plait as it had been slept on—she could blossom forth in a perfection of the daintiest fashion to drive in the park, or even merely to receive a visitor.

She would fly from the most optimistic view of the ease with which she would enter into her inheritance to a mood, not of despair—for she always believed that the estate would be hers in the end—but of terrible premonitions of the dangers and desperate encounters that lay ahead.

McNeil learnt quickly to look out for these changes. He learnt, too, the diplomacy that is necessary in the treatment of such a temperament. In the matter of his friend Bubbly, for example, he exercised a tact that verged upon deception. He knew that his mistress cast the glamour of romance over the ex-officer, and that the mere suggestion of employing a civilian would be distasteful to her.

He began, therefore, with vague hints of the need for strategy and for cunning in the struggle that must come with Rufus Rintoul. From that he got to mentioning a friend of powerful intellect, and regretting that they could not have the advantage of his advice. As he selected his men—of whom more later—and brought them individually to be approved by Signorina Marinetti, the name of the Honourable Thomas Owen would be dropped casually, but always with the suggestion that here was some one of outstanding mental power whose brain, unfortunately, could not be at the service of the Signorina's forces.

McNeil conducted his campaign with an infinite patience which was at last rewarded with success.

"This Mr Owen, your friend, if he is so clever, we must take him with us to Scotland," declared Francesca.

McNeil shook his head gloomily.

"He is a busy man—a journalist. One could hardly ask him to leave Fleet Street and all his interests."

"Dear me, man," exclaimed the lady impatiently. "Surely he would give up something for his friend. Bring him to see me. I will ask him myself. Surely he will not refuse a woman in need of help."

"I had not thought of that," said Neil disingenuously. "Per-

haps—yes—how can he refuse when he has seen you? I will entice him here, Signorina, and you must do the rest."

Meantime Bubbly had been leading a noble and a temperate life, which showed itself in his eyes, which were no longer rheumy and bloodshot, and in his complexion, which had taken on a freshness that it had not possessed for years. McNeil's story had intrigued him to such an extent that he was prepared to make almost any sacrifice rather than be left behind.

He really looked quite a nice little man when, shaven and fresh and clean, he set out with McNeil for his first interview with Francesca Marinetti.

He was her slave from the moment when he entered her room and saw her in the full blossom of her beauty. Francesca, fired by the thought of his resistance, had brought to bear upon him all the fascination that art could add to nature. She wore a close-fitting dress of dull black silk, unrelieved by any trimming, that left her beautiful neck and arms bare, and that framed and intensified the velvet whiteness of her skin. Her face was pale, and her dark eyes shone luminous and melancholy as she fixed them upon her already willing victim. Her pose, as McNeil introduced his companion, was one of eager interest, which changed to pitiful pleading as she spoke.

"Mr Owen, I am glad to meet you. I have heard so much of you from Major McNeil, but now that I see you, your face tells me that he did not do you justice. Oh, Mr Owen, will you help to save a poor lonely girl from cruel injustice?"

But for a frown of warning from McNeil, who stood well out of Francesca's line of vision, the Honourable Thomas would have capitulated without a struggle. He remembered his pose just in time.

"I—I am a busy man, Signorina," he stammered, feeling himself to be a brute to hesitate. "But anything I can do in my spare time—what spare time I have, I mean—I——"

"Spare time! Mio Dio!" interrupted Francesca, throwing out an arm in a graceful gesture of scorn. "That is no more than the meanest would offer. I need men who will devote their lives to my service if need be—aye, and shed their life's blood in my cause, indeed an' I do."

Bubbly felt, and looked, rather like a worm. He ignored McNeil, who still frowned a warning, and bowed before this new goddess.

"How can I refuse such an appeal?" he said, with what courtliness he could muster. "Signorina, I am your humble servant. Do with me what you will."

"But your work—your profession that you are so wrapped up in?" McNeil threw in.

"One must make sacrifices," replied Bubbly, attempting to hide his glee under a veil of

resignation. "And in what better cause could one make them than in that of Signorina Marinetti?"

"Eccolo!" exclaimed Francesca, turning a triumphant glance upon McNeil. "How much stronger is my appeal than yours! Losh! it takes a woman's tongue to win a man."

"And a woman's beauty," added McNeil with a smile.

"Mr Owen, you have made me so happy."

She took Bubbly's two hands in hers, and, to his everlasting delight, kissed them fervently.

"Never shall you have cause to regret that you espoused my cause. I swear it!" she said, yet with an exaltation that raised the melodramatic words far from any hint of burlesque. "Come, let us hold a council of war."

Francesca, gracefully reclining on a low couch, with Bubbly in an attitude almost of worship in a chair before her, told the story of the will and of her determination to win the inheritance. When she had made an end, Bubbly questioned her upon such details as remained obscure, while McNeil sat by, a trifle jealous of the impression that his friend had made so quickly. Epigrams upon the fickleness of womankind floated vaguely through his mind.

"I think your plan to surround the house in the night can't be beaten, Signorina, if it is possible," said Owen. "But that we can hardly decide until we get to the spot and reconnoitre. Where is this estate, by the way?"

It was a question that McNeil had never thought to ask, and which Francesca had not happened to mention.

"Dorning House," she said now in answer to Bubbly's question. "And it is in the village of Dorning."

"Dorning!" exclaimed McNeil, starting to his feet in surprise. "Why, I spent half my time there when I was a kid—my grandfather kept the Rintoul Arms. It's funny that I never connected the name of Rintoul with that, but the name is common enough in Scotland."

"Then you must know Dorning House. How splendid!" cried Francesca, clapping her hands delightedly. "I kent I was inspired when I picked your letter from all the others. Fate is on my side, and I'll win through willy-nilly."

"Are your people still there? They might be of use to us," said the Honourable Thomas.

McNeil shook his head.

"No," he said. "I don't know who runs the inn now. My grandparents died years ago, and everything was sold up. It was a quaint old place, and I shall be interested to see it again."

"What matters at present," said Bubbly, "is the number of men required to surround the house and keep the Signorina's uncle out."

"It's a big place," replied McNeil thoughtfully. "When I was a boy my grandfather

used to take me there when he went to visit the butler. By the way, Signorina, that must be the very man who is to act as umpire. What was his name?"

"Ronald Aitken. It is in the will."

"That's right—Mr Aitken. I used to think him quite a big man in those days. My old grandad treated him with great respect. I don't suppose he'll know me again. But about the house. It's big, but I don't think there are any doors except at back and front. By the way, a fairly deep stream runs round three sides of it at a little distance. That ought to make things much easier. I fancy that with half a dozen determined men besides ourselves, we can keep any one back, while the Signorina makes her way in."

"Good," said Bubbly. "Six let it be. How many have you got?"

He was enjoying himself immensely. So thoroughly had Francesca absorbed the idea of his brilliant brain, that she listened tensely to his lightest word. It was a new experience for the dissipated little journalist.

"Major McNeil has already found me six," said she. "There is Captain Wilson, who is very strong and, I jalouse, as brave as a lion; Captain Pringle, a most handsome and gallant man; Mr Bailey—I could see in his eyes that he would die for me, beautiful brown eyes like the eyes of a faithful dog; Mr Televant, who has only one eye, but he also will be true; Captain Beattie, such a huge man; and Major Lindsay, who is rather old and ugly, but I felt so sorry for him to be out of work. With them we can do anything—and with you forbye, Mr Owen, success is ours already. Eccolo!"

Turning with a light of fanatical enthusiasm in her wonderful eyes, she caught a look on McNeil's face that changed her mood in a moment.

"And abin all there is Major McNeil, without whom I should have lost all—'deed and I would. Never can I thank him enough for entering my service."

With her warm-hearted impetuosity she threw her soft arms around McNeil's neck and kissed his scarred cheek. The Honourable Thomas Owen's heart palpitated wildly with jealousy. He became suddenly aware of McNeil's mental and physical shortcomings, and wondered what he had ever seen to like in the man. McNeil thrilled at the touch of the warm soft lips, though he knew that it meant no more than if another had thanked him with a word and a smile.

The six men whom she had named to Owen were all men whom McNeil knew personally and felt that he could rely upon. Lindsay, the eldest of them, was a man of over forty, with grizzled hair and a lined rugged face. He had been a country solicitor before the war, and had sold out his busi-

ness to join the army. On his discharge he had neither the capital nor the connection to start afresh, and had been compelled to accept temporary posts in other men's offices. McNeil found him out of work and ready to accept anything that would bring in a few pounds. He had little imagination and less humour, and Francesca Marinetti's story left him cold. He looked upon the coming adventure as a regrettable necessity, forced upon him by want, yet McNeil knew that, even so, he was worthy of his hire. Once he had accepted service, he would obey orders faithfully and well.

Wilson was the youngest of them all, and looked upon his new job as a huge joke. Joining the Army at eighteen and leaving it at twenty-three had played the devil with his chances in life, for at the latter age a man cannot devote five years of his life to the study of medicine. He had, therefore, accepted a clerkship in a stockbroker's office, a post which he retained for two complete weeks. He then kicked over his stool, informed his employer that he was fed up to the back teeth with the sight of him, and cleared out.

Pringle, as Francesca said, was a handsome man, but quite sound at heart. He was the only one of the six who was not needy, and McNeil had interested him in the affair from the point of view of sport. The sight of his prospective mistress decided him, and he was one of the most enthusiastic of her supporters. He and Bailey—of the beautiful brown eyes—were close friends.

McNeil had picked Beattie on account of his size. He was quite young—not much older than Wilson—but his mind was as blank as that of a child. He had a great hearty laugh, the temper of an angel, and muscles that would do credit to a heavy-weight champion. These were his sole assets, with the exception of his adoration for his mistress. After he had met her, he purchased all the picture post-cards of her that were obtainable and slept with them beneath his pillow.

Televant, a long lean man of about thirty-five, was silent and self-contained, but there was about him an air of suppressed vitality that promised well for moments of action. His one effective eye was blue and piercing, darting hither and thither in constant observation, while the other, of glass, stared stupidly ahead, so that he appeared an altogether different man according to the angle from which he was observed. No one knew anything of his past beyond August 1914, but McNeil had fought by his side and had full belief in his straightness.

On the morning before she moved her forces north Francesca Marinetti and the eight men met together for the first time. With such a large and admiring audience her dramatic instinct took command.

She stood in the centre of the room, tall, graceful, and lissome, and with her wonderful voice, her gestures, the ever-changing expression of her pale beautiful face, appealed to these men in words that in cold print would be preposterous melodrama, but that, in the spell of her personality, thrilled them to the core, with the exception of Lindsay the matter-of-fact, who was unthrillable.

She told these men, in her musical English with its quaint foreign accent and still more quaint Scotticisms, the story of her uncle's strange will. She told them of her other uncle, Rufus Rintoul, and painted his picture to them in primary colours—as she saw him. She dwelt upon the perils of the work before them, prophesied danger and death, and promised compensation to the unfortunate. Finally, throwing out her arms in an effective gesture of appeal, she called upon them to follow her through danger and disaster to the attainment of her goal.

As she ended, there was quite a demonstration of enthusiasm. Spontaneously the men rose to their feet. McNeil, at a loss for words, was forestalled by the Honourable Thomas Owen.

"Gentlemen," he cried, "let any man who will not follow Signorina Marinetti through thick and thin clear out now. The rest are committed to her service until the Dorning estate is hers without a doubt."

A murmur of agreement ran round the room.

McNeil glanced shrewdly round the set faces in whose eyes sparkled the light of enthusiasm for a cause, and congratulated himself on his choice of men.

"As no one has gone," he said, "I take it you are all in agreement?"

A confused affirmative tumult answered him. The more taciturn were content with a simple "Yes," but the enthusiasm of Wilson and Beattie expressed itself in voluble oaths of fealty.

"Then, my heroic champions," declared Francesca, "the estates are mine already. To-night we go north. Major McNeil will give you your instructions."

Then, as they filed from the room, she took the hand of each, and, her eyes emotional with gratitude, pressed it in both of hers.

CHAPTER VIII.

For quite a week before the dawn that was to usher in the competition for the Rintoul estates, there was a stir of excitement in the placid village of Dorning, such as one sees throughout England in the days that precede the Derby or the Grand National. Only one subject was talked of, and chances were freely reckoned up, Rufus Rintoul being an

odds-on favourite (in the racing sense only, for the man himself was loathed by the tenantry), Jean Rintoul a likely outsider, and her unknown cousin from abroad a very doubtful starter.

In the evenings, as the gloaming called time to the day's toil, groups of white aprons gathered by the little green gates and flapped like signals in the breeze as their owners leaned their bare muscular arms on the palings and discussed the one enthralling subject.

While the women-folk, poor souls, talked mere rumour by the gate-post, their lords and masters absorbed the latest news with their mild table-beer in the Rintoul Arms, the information bureau of the village.

Mr Morrison, the landlord (no one would have dreamt of calling him plain Peter Morrison), was highly respected throughout the district. He was a mild elderly man, with short white side-whiskers and shaven lips and chin, a combination which had a somewhat sheep-like effect. He dressed in sober black, and wore a Gladstonian collar and a wisp of black bow-tie, one end of which was usually rather long and inclined to stick out angularly against his white shirt-front. He was a man of considerable intelligence, an ardent politician to whom Tories were anathema (he had been nurtured on Gladstonian radicalism and reared in the heat of the Midlothian campaigns), and a voracious reader of improving works. He was therefore qualified to make himself agreeable, not only to the villagers and the surrounding farmers, but also to such casual tourists as came in summer to view the ruins of Dorning Castle.

Under his control the Rintoul Arms was an inn to be proud of. The bare deal benches and tables of the tap-room where the farm labourers gathered o' nights were scrubbed to an almost ivory whiteness. The black-leaded spittoons with their fresh pine sawdust shone like patent leather. The habitues had been trained to respect, not only their host, but everything that was his, so that a better-conducted house could not be found in the length and breadth of the land.

The bar itself, with its rows of quaint old copper measures, its brass candlesticks, and the four little delf barrels with different coloured bands around them, and drip-cups dangling from their polished taps, was a delight to a tired traveller. At its inner end it swelled out into a square alcove—the holy of holies. Here burnt a cheerful fire, and of an evening the privileged gathered round the mahogany table and, over a modest glass of hot toddy in which Mr Morrison joined, discussed the policies of the empire. The factor of the Rintoul estate, the butler of Dorning House, the schoolmaster, an occasional farmer from one of the great Mains that lay within easy reach of

the village—these and such as they alone dared penetrate to the sacred bar-parlour.

There was one exception—Rab Wilson. Mr Morrison was in something of a quandary regarding the ex-soldier and alleged poacher. The village was proud of his army record, but suspicious both of his past and present. By trade he was a thatcher, and admittedly the most competent of his craft in the district, but the work was intermittent, and, except when the ricks were building, he had plenty of spare time on his hands. He lodged with a widow woman who was, strange to say, as close as an oyster as to his movements, and the poacher theory, firmly held by the village in general, remained unproven.

On his return from the army, Rab Wilson boldly stormed the bar-parlour of the Rintoul Arms, to the consternation of its defenders. With the ordinary intruder Mr Morrison, despite his mild appearance, had a short way, but with a soldier newly returned from the war with his honours thick upon him, he was at a loss; and before he had come to a decision, Rab had established himself firmly, and there he was to be found, with a pipe and a pint-pot, two evenings before the dawn of the struggle for the Rintoul inheritance.

He was a handsome devil-may-care fellow, dressed after the fashion of a gamekeeper, in a loose Norfolk jacket with roomy pockets, a pair of army riding-breeches, and many-buttoned cloth gaiters. Rumour had it that he was something of a Don Juan, and perhaps he fostered the idea, for a lassie on an outlying farm might prove a better excuse for returning late of a night than a pheasant.

It was early in the evening, and Rab had the little parlour to himself. Mr Morrison was behind the bar with a serving-wench, washing glasses with a thoroughness unusual in these slap-dash days. Nothing less than rinsing in two separate brass-bound wooden tubs filled with scalding water, followed by drying and polishing with two spotless glass-towels, would satisfy his fastidiousness.

It was mid-April and still clear, but the evenings were chilly, and Rab sat gazing intently into the heart of a glowing fire. Occasionally a faint smile would cross his shaven lips, as though the subject of his thoughts amused him, as indeed it did, for earlier in the day he had had an interview with the minister, as a result of which he found himself the latter's secret ally.

He was more than astonished when the Reverend William Murdoch stopped him in the road from the manse to the green, for as a rule the minister passed him by with the faintest of recognitions.

"Good-morning, Rab," said the Reverend William.

"Good-morning," echoed Rab, and would have passed

on, had not the other blocked his way.

"I haven't seen you in the kirk lately, Rab," said the minister.

"Ye ken fine ye've never seen me in the kirk, sae there's nae need for the 'lately,'" retorted Rab, looking at the minister with a disarming smile.

"It's not a matter to be proud of," said Murdoch, nettled by the man's self-possession.

"I'm no' sae sure o' that. It tak's a bit o' nerve tae gang your ain gait in a clashin' wee place like Dorning."

The minister ignored this sally.

"What reason have you now for stopping away?" he asked in a more friendly tone.

"Weel, it micht be that I differ frae ye on a point o' doctrine, or it micht be that I dinna like your deleevery, but tae be perfectly honest, it's neither. I juist canna be fashed gaun tae the kirk when I can as weel be oot i' the fresh air."

The words were spoken with such an ingenuous frankness that Murdoch could not take offence at them. Indeed, they aroused his sympathy, for there was a little lady up at the manse who expressed herself in different terms but to much the same effect.

"As we're not likely to agree, then, Rab, we'd better agree to differ," he said pleasantly. "But there's another matter I want to speak to you about."

"Aye, I thoucht there maun be. You'd no' ha'e fashed yoursel' aboot me plunkin' the kirk if you hadna had an ulterior motive," grinned Rab.

"Maybe not," agreed the minister, and, adopting the bluntness of the other, went on: "Look here, Rab, I want your help. Of course you know all about the Laird's will?"

"Wha doesna? It's the clash o' the toon."

"Well, I've been told that you might be likely to sympathise with one of the possible heirs."

"Meanin'?"

Murdoch saw that no help would be forthcoming, and that he must declare his mission and take his chance.

"You know that Miss Rintoul is stopping at the manse," he said bluntly. "If she is to have a chance in this absurd contest, she must have strong arms to help her. Mine are strong, but one pair is not enough. Miss Rintoul has an idea that you might volunteer yours."

Rab Wilson's eyes twinkled, and he let a low chuckle escape him.

"Man, what a ploy!" he exclaimed.

"In the matter of reward," went on the minister, "Miss Rintoul is not wealthy, but if she should succeed——"

"Haud your tongue, man," Rab interrupted him sharply. "I've kent wee Jean Rintoul since she was a bairn, and frae what I've seen and what I ken o' her Uncle Rufus, I'd sooner

ha'e her at the Big Hoose than him. As for reward—weel, I'd raither help for the fun o' the thing. Losh! Think o' me an' the meenister colloguin' thegither agin the peace o' the realm."

Rab chuckled again at the incongruity.

"It won't be the first time we've fought in the same cause," said Murdoch.

"You're richt," agreed Rab, and added with a sudden earnestness, "An', man, I nearly took tae the kirk when I heard you'd been fechtin' in the line instead o' taking it easy as a padre."

The Reverend William flushed at the compliment.

"Yet some of the padres took most of the risks we took, Rab. However, that's past and done with. You agree to join me in helping Miss Rintoul to the fortune she deserves?"

"I'm wi' you," declared Rab emphatically.

"Then come to the manse to-night at nine, and we'll hold a council of war."

"Me at the manse! Losh, you'll ha'e me in the Kirk-session afore I ken whaur I am. Still, I'll tak' the risk. I'll be there, Mr Murdoch."

As he sat now by the bar-parlour fire, Rab chuckled again at the thought of hobnobbing with the minister. He had no idea of what steps it might be necessary to take in Jean Rintoul's interests, but the thought of a possible fight with Rufus Rintoul, whom he knew well by sight, increased his interest in the enterprise. Like many intelligent Scotsmen, a vein of romanticism streaked his solid sense, and the idea of helping the beautiful girl whom he had known from her childhood, and to whom he looked up with an intense but secret admiration, appealed strongly to him.

Rab's pleasant ruminations were disturbed by the entrance of two strangers, an unusual circumstance so early in the year. He looked round as he heard them in conversation with Mr Morrison, and noted that one was a tall well-built man of about his own age with a scarred face, while the other was small and fair with eyes that darted noticingly hither and thither.

"Beds for the night?" he heard Mr Morrison say. "Aye, gentlemen, there'll be nae defeeculty aboot that. Run ben tae the kitchen, Maggie lass, an' tell Mrs Morrison tae air the sheets in number one an' number three. Ye'll be frae Edinburgh, nae doot?"

McNeil—for the scarred man was he—smiled appreciatively. It was homely to hear the old familiar, unashamed curiosity.

"Yes, we're from Edinburgh," he agreed.

"It's no' often we get veesitors this time o' the year," went on Mr Morrison. "Ye'll be early for holiday-making."

"One can't always choose one's own time," said McNeil. "And having the opportunity, I thought I should like to see the old place again. I knew Dorning well as a lad."

"Did ye now? Maybe ye've got freends i' the place?"

"Well, I daresay I shall meet with some faces I know, though I doubt if I'll find any one who knows mine."

McNeil happened to look round as he spoke and met the eye of Rab Wilson. He smiled and went forward into the bar-parlour.

"I did not know how quickly my words would come true," he said, advancing with outstretched hand. "How are you, Rab?"

Rab stood up and looked in a puzzled fashion at the man who accosted him so familiarly. Some reminiscence of the past rose vaguely in his mind, but would not focus itself. He looked doubtfully at the stranger, and awaited enlightenment. McNeil, seeing that he was not recognised, recollected with a shock the change in his appearance.

"You don't know me, Rab?" he said. "D'you mind the time we found the owl's nest on top o' the fir-tree in Denman's Cover? D'you mind the way the owlets spat at us, and how you hit them over the head with your bonnet. D'you mind the way we carried them home, and how I didna dare show mine because it was the Sabbath, and my grandfather thought I was taking a quiet walk?"

"Losh! It's Neil McNeil. Man, I'd never ha'e kent ye!" exclaimed Rab Wilson, coming forward with outstretched hand. "Man, but I'm glad tae see ye!"

His rugged face lit up in a smile of welcome, for these two had been boys together, and had shared many wild pranks that their primitive instincts had led them into.

"I'm not surprised you didn't know me, Rab," said Neil as he took the outstretched hand in his. "I've changed more than you have, lad."

"Aye, ye've changed, Neil," said Rab, as he looked into the scarred face. "But I'm no' sae shair it hasna improved ye."

Old associations are potent. Rab Wilson had faded from McNeil's mind for many years, but the sight of him brought back his boyhood days, and he felt drawn towards the rugged countryman by the sentiment of the past. He slipped into a seat in the bar-parlour and looked appreciatively round him. Nothing had changed since his boyhood except the landlord.

"Sae you're holiday-makin', are you, Neil?" said Rab. "I daursay you're a big man i' the world noo, an' in a different sphere frae the puir thatcher that you played wi' when you were a laddie."

"A very different sphere, I admit," replied McNeil. "But I fancy you have the best end of the stick, Rab. Slaving in Fleet Street is hardly an improvement on thatching in Dorning, and hasn't got the advantage of an occasional shot at——"

"Wheesht, man! They days are bye wi', an' forbye it's no'

chancy tae speak sae lood. Sae you've taken tae the writin', ha'e you? I thocht you were by way o' bein' a chemist or something."

"Five years of war spoilt me for that. I've had to take what I could get."

"You're lucky tae be able tae tak' a holiday sae faur frae your wark," said Rab shrewdly.

While he talked, McNeil had been thinking rapidly. It seemed sheer luck that he should have dropped across an old acquaintance immediately upon his arrival in Dorning.

"To tell you the truth, Rab," he said, lowering his voice, "it isn't altogether a holiday. I suppose you know all about Laird Rintoul's strange will?"

Rab Wilson spat into the fire unconcernedly, but the action hid his face for the moment from McNeil, and when it turned to him again it was impassive as ever.

"We've a' heard aboot that. The auld man maun ha'e been daft when he made it," he said. "But what's it tae dae wi' you?"

"I can hardly tell you that, Rab. It isn't my secret. I should like to know, though, if you've seen or heard anything that has a bearing on the affair. Any strange people about, for instance?"

"Barrin' yoursel' an' your freend there, there's been nane that I ken o'," replied Rab slowly.

He was thinking hard, trying to guess in whose interest McNeil spoke, and alert to pick up anything that would be of value to his new mistress, Jean Rintoul. He judged that in some way McNeil must be in touch with Rufus Rintoul and acting on his behalf. Should this be so, no memory of a boyhood friendship would be permitted to interfere with his loyalty to his mistress.

"Your freend there'll be on the same game, I'm thinking?" he said, nodding towards the Honourable Thomas Owen, who was deep in conversation with Mr Morrison at the bar.

"Yes," admitted McNeil. "Have you seen anything lately of the Laird's brother, Rufus Rintoul?"

"No' a sicht o' him, an' I'm nane the waur for it," replied Rab drily. "Is he a freend o' yours?"

"I've met him," said McNeil cautiously.

"An' wha's your freend there?" asked Rab, pointing his pipe towards Bubbly, who leant upon the bar, sampling for the first time the beer of Scotland.

"One of the cleverest journalists in England. Bubbly, I've met an old friend. Come and meet Rab Wilson."

The Honourable Thomas Owen tipped his tankard lingeringly, and moved into the bar-parlour.

"I was beginning to wonder if you'd forgotten me," he said. "When you Scots get together, the rest of us can go hang."

"Well, you found a friend yourself, didn't you?" retorted McNeil, nodding meaningly at the tankard that Bubbly still clung to.

"Perhaps not a friend, but certainly an old acquaintance," grinned Owen. "Let me introduce you. Landlord, three tankards of your astonishingly good beer."

He slipped into a seat by McNeil's side, as Mr Morrison placed the foaming pots upon the table.

"It's a temptation," he said sadly as he raised his to his lips. "Many a man would fall, but I've sworn that three is my limit. It is difficult to remember that I am a reformed character."

"Bubbly, I've found a friend. If anything unusual crops up in the village, Rab Wilson here will keep us posted."

"Then here's good luck to Mr Wilson," said Bubbly, raising his pot in honour of the stranger.

"We were boys together, so I can trust him," explained McNeil.

Rab raised his tankard in a silent toast, but his eyes twinkled above the froth as he put it to his lips.

"So far our friend Rufus has not put in an appearance," went on McNeil in a confidential tone.

At that moment heavy steps were heard in the stone-flagged passage, and there strode into the bar, his flaming head held high, as though already he owned the property, the man whom McNeil had named.

(To be continued.)

VAGABOND IMPRESSIONS.

BY ST JOHN LUCAS.

LETTERS READ AGAIN.

THE publication of two additional volumes of Byron's letters and of Professor Saintsbury's 'Letter Book' has been followed by the customary lamentations. The epistolary art, we are informed once more, is dead: slain by cheap postage, the telegraph and the telephone, and the "swirl and hurry of modern life." The daily paper has rendered the sending of mere "news" superfluous, and ordinary people possess neither the leisure nor the taste for delighting (or annoying) their friends with intimate meditations and impressions. As far as I was able to observe, only one bold critic had the courage to lift up his voice and to assert his relief at the decline of the once universal habit of pouring forth stilted and interminable screeds concerning the state of the writer's gout or affections, the trees that he had planted, the old sow's litter, and his opinion of the Tory Party. All the others sang a dirge over the grave of the defunct, and made appropriate references to Madame de Sévigné and Horace Walpole. A noble art is dead. *R.I.P.*

But is it? And was it so universal as many people believe? Certainly an enormous majority of modern letter-writers pay no attention to the graces of style and expression: their effusions are merely brief statements of fact, elongated telegrams; or, if the writer be feminine, artless questions which, like the mysterious queries in the Latin Grammar, already anticipate the appropriate answer. But it seems probable that much the same kind of thing was franked by complacent members of Parliament in the golden days of letter-writing, and that the correspondence of Sir Tunbelly Clumsy and Miss Hoyden was as dull and illiterate as that of Mr Grabb (the sleek and oily profiteer) and Major-General Sir Frumious Bandersnatch (the chuckle-headed old piffler), though it was certainly more lengthy. Brilliant letters proceed from brilliant personalities, and the breed is and was rare.

It has always seemed to me one of Providence's more ironical dispensations that the miserable race of authors, groaning and sweating over their disgusting pens and inkpots and typewriters, should, on the whole, have produced the best letters. That any one who has suffered from the soul-destroying, back-breaking, head-

splitting, and heartrending agonies of literary composition should ever have sufficient energy left for writing anything more than a post-card is a remarkable instance of the indomitable power of the human mind. Of course many authors of fine books write letters which, like the famous drama of young Pyramus and his love Thisbe, are both brief and tedious. I rejoice in the friendship of a celebrated novelist whose epistolary style would be a disgrace to a semi-imbecile leech-gatherer. But the fact remains that nearly all the great letter-writers were great authors: Madame de Sévigné may be quoted as an exception, but she was really a great author, who put all her talent into her correspondence.

Good letters are a valuable contribution to history, and the best possible key to the character of the writer—granted, of course, that the latter has no uneasy consciousness of ultimate publication, and that, when his letters are eventually printed, he is lucky enough to find an editor who possesses courage and sympathy. Diaries are usually frauds, and so very often are letters written by those who have attained eminence. Few people can emulate the childlike candour of Pepys, who, we may suppose, trusted in his cipher, and fewer will desire to rival the hysterical self-revelations of Marie Bashkirtseff. A diary is the first refuge of a self-conscious mind; small note-books, stumps of cheque-books, and old bills would often tell the acute observer more about a man's true character. As a commentary on contemporary events, too, the diary is handicapped because, in recording them, it is impossible to exercise the reasoned judgment, the art of selection, which make such criticism valuable. This, of course, applies also to letters, but in a much less degree; usually, in correspondence, the writer has had time to cool down, and the mere fact that the person whom he addresses is, in however mild a sense, a critic, preserves him from the monstrous ineptitudes which are to be found in so many diaries that have been dragged, in all their shivering nakedness, into the light of day. Memory, as Miss Prism said in the play, is a diary that we all carry about with us; and her pupil's retort—that it always chronicled the things that had never happened and couldn't possibly have happened—was a paradox far too cynical for the lips of a young and pretty girl. In reading old diaries (if one has been foolish enough to keep them), it is strange to see how experiences which one registered as enormously important have entirely faded from one's memory, whilst those that have acquired an abiding value were not considered worth an entry.

As for diaries written for publication, they are generally claptrap. The 'Journal des

Goncourt' is, I suppose, the best; it contains some good scurrilous stories, and affords some interesting glimpses of Princesse Mathilde, Renan, Tourgueneff, Flaubert, Gautier, and literary life in Paris for half a century; on the other hand, it exudes petty spite and dyspeptic bad temper, and pushes the investigations of personal detail to the farthest limits of bad taste. At least, however, it is the work of a man who was sincere, according to his own strange lights, in the pursuit of his art; and it contrasts very favourably with certain would-be sensational efforts in similar form which have been recently published in England.

The last item in Professor Saintsbury's excellent little book is a letter written to him by Stevenson concerning Mr Kipling and a mysterious umbrella. Stevenson died twenty-eight years ago; but there have been many good letters written since 1894, though the best of them certainly came from elderly survivors of the Victorian epoch. Though the first half of the nineteenth century can claim the two best letter-writers in English—Keats and Byron—the second half is not far behind it with Stevenson, Henry James, and Meredith.

Of these three great men, the greatest was the least satisfactory as regards letters. Perhaps, too, he was less fortunate in his editor: a son who makes a selection from his father's correspondence is no doubt haunted by fears and scruples which would not trouble a literary friend. The letters, at any rate—intensely interesting as any emanation from so alert and vivid an intelligence is bound to be—always seem to me somewhat disappointing. Those to Lord Morley, the only correspondent who was near Meredith in intellect and character, are so good that one longs for more of them, and for less of the rollicking but rather tedious jocosities which were poured out to William Hardman and others. Although the volumes contain many intimate letters, they leave one with a slightly depressing sense of the writer's aloofness, and fail to convey fully the great personal charm which he undoubtedly possessed. Still, the collection is a fine addition to English literature, and a record, though imperfect, of a noble and brilliant soul. Hatred of shams and fustian, stoical courage in domestic sorrow, virile contempt for clerical, political, or literary cant, and a flaming passion for truth—these were some of the private virtues of the man who possessed the keenest *intellect* in modern imaginative literature.

It would be easy to select—Jack Horner-wise, as Meredith described the process on one occasion—innumerable examples of his wit, his irony, and his sage criticism of men and events. On re-reading the letters after a long interval, I was again deeply impressed by

two short notes which I had marked when the volumes appeared in 1912. They may not be his finest letters, but they show him at his best. The first was written to Lord Morley at midnight on New Year's Eve, forty-four years ago.

". . . I greet you in the first hour of the New (Year) after a look at the stars from my chalet door, and listening to the bells. We have just marked one of our full stops, at which Time, turning back as he goes, looks with his old-gentleman smile. To come from a gaze at the stars—Orion and shaking Sirius below him—is to catch a glance at the inscrutable face of him that hurries us on, as on a wheel, from dust to dust. I thought of you and how it might be with you this year; hoped for good; saw beyond good and evil to great stillness, another form of moving for you and me. It seems to me that Spirit is—how, where, and by what means involving us, none can say. But in this life there is no life save in spirit. The rest of life, and we may know it in love—is an aching and a rotting . . ."

The other, also addressed to Lord Morley, was written after the death of his second wife:—

"The end has come. Yesterday the poor soul so hardly tried breathed her last. She looks Mistress of the Kingdom of Rest. The close was painless, in the arms of her sister, at 10 to 6 evening. I returned from town 40 minutes later and found the dead hand warm—only not the squeeze that never failed at mine. With me she lives till I go out . . ."

I believe that the surviving friends and many admirers of Robert Louis Stevenson hold that his best work ('Weir' excepted) was done before he went to Samoa; to this view I must profess myself a heretic. There seems to me more life, humour, power, and brilliant characterisation in any one of the later books — in 'The Wrecker,' 'The Ebb Tide,' or in 'Island Nights' Entertainments'—than in all the elaborate Scots romances and the short stories that Stevenson wrote before he settled at Vailima. When he broke away miraculously and triumphantly from invalid life for a few too brief years, he soared to the height of his accomplishment. I know that Sir Sidney Colvin has called 'The South Seas' an "unsuccessful result" of Stevenson's wanderings, and I can only echo the immortal Pinkerton of 'The Wrecker,' and say that I can't see in snakes why. Stevenson's letters from the South Seas, however, have not the charm for me that his earlier correspondence possesses; I am open to correction, but I cannot help imagining that when he became famous he knew nearly every-

thing he wrote would eventually be published, and that there is consequently a slightly self-conscious note in some of the later letters. There are hardly any that one would like to see expunged; they are all good; but properly to appreciate the gaiety, the sensitiveness, the courage, and the jolly vanity of the man, one should read and reread those written before his migration.

For sheer fun there is nothing like them. Probably it is the effect of the War that makes one now, like Sir Arthur Balfour, especially appreciate cheerfulness in literature. On reading the letters again, I found that the gay and humorous examples seemed as spontaneous and delightful as ever, but that there was a hint of high-falutin in some of the others, especially in those written to console bereaved friends. Perhaps the best are addressed to Henley and to R. A. M. Stevenson, for in these he combines a riotous humour with amazingly acute and suggestive criticism on the meaning and methods of his art. Henley was his playmate in the game of inventing fictitious personages and reporting their adventures: one wishes there was more of Mr Pirbright Smith and Mr Pegfurth Bannatyne.

"... Pirbright Smith is well. Old Mr Pegfurth Bannatyne is here staying at a country inn. His whole baggage is a pair of socks and a book in a fishing-basket; and he borrows even a rod from the landlord. He walked here over the hills from Sanquhar, 'singin',' he says, 'like a mavis.' I naturally asked him about Hazlitt. 'He wouldnae take his drink,' he said, 'a queer, queer fellow.' But did not seem further communicative. He says he has become 'releegious,' but still swears like a trooper. ... He says he is writing his memoirs, which will be interesting. He once met Borrow; they boxed; 'and Geordie,' says the old man, chuckling, 'gave me the damnedest hiding.' Of Wordsworth he remarked, 'He wasnae sound in the faith, sir, and a milk-blooded, blue-spectacled bitch forbye. But his po'mes are grand — there's no denying that.'"

Almost as good is the list of imaginary works refused by a certain firm of publishers, which follows a distorted recollection of a dinner on steak and onions with John Addington Symonds.

"... O that Coronation! What a shouting crowd there was! I obviously got a firework in each eye. The king looked very magnificent, to be sure; and that great hall where we feasted on seven hundred foods, and drank fifty royal wines—*quel coup d'œil!* but was it not overdone, even for a coronation—almost a vulgar luxury? And eleven is certainly too late to begin

dinner. (It was really 6.30 instead of 5.30.)

"Your list of books that Cassells have refused in these weeks is not quite complete; they also refused:—

1. Six undiscovered Tragedies, one romantic Comedy, a fragment of journal extending over six years, and an unfinished autobiography, reaching up to the first performance of King John. By William Shakespeare.
2. The journals and private correspondence of David, King of Israel.
3. Poetical Works of Arthur, Iron Dook of Wellington, including a monody on Napoleon.
4. Eight books of an unfinished novel, 'Solomon Crabb.' By Henry Fielding.
5. Stevenson's Moral Emblems."

And the lunch at the Bathgate Hotel:—

"... The frolic was yesterday, Sawbath; the scene, the Royal Hotel, Bathgate; I went there with a humorous friend to lunch. The maid soon showed herself a lass of character. She was looking out of window. On being asked what she was after, 'I'm lookin' for my lad,' says she. 'Is that him?' 'Weel, I've been lookin' for him a' my life, and I've never seen him yet,' was the response. I wrote her some verses in the vernacular; she read them. 'They're no bad for a beginner,' said she. The landlady's daughter, Miss Stewart, was present in oil-colour; so I wrote her a declaration in verse and sent it by the handmaid. She (Miss S.) was present on the stair to witness our departure, in a warm, suffused condition. Damn it, Gosse, you needn't suppose that you're the only poet in the world. ..."

Mere high spirits and clowning, the serious person will remark; but what a joy it must have been to receive such letters! They are completely natural and unforced, and a radiant personality shines from every paragraph.

In a criticism of the first 'Vailima Letters,' addressed to Sir Sidney Colvin, Henry James complains of "a certain tormenting effect in his literary confidences (to you), glimpses, promises, revelations, &c., arising from his so seldom telling the subject, the *idea* of the thing—what he sees, what he wants to do, &c.—as against his pouring forth titles, chapters, divisions, names, &c., in such magnificent abundance." One can only rub one's eyes at this portentous utterance, and reiterate the remark of Mr Pinkerton. But Henry James had only seen a few of the letters. "The subject, the idea of the thing—what he sees, what he wants to do"—this, surely, is exactly what Stevenson expounded over and

over again as clearly as possible. There was nothing of the sublimely unconscious genius in his attitude towards his art; he realised very well the goal at which he was aiming, and, as 'A Gossip on Romance' shows, had sedulously studied the methods of attainment.

". . . Were you to reread some Balzac, as I have been doing, it would greatly help to clear your eyes. He was a man who never found his method. An inarticulate Shakespeare, smothered under forcible-feeble detail. It is astounding to the riper mind how bad he is, how feeble, how untrue, how tedious; and, of course, when he surrendered to his temperament, how good and powerful. And yet never plain nor clear. He could not consent to be dull, and thus became so. He would leave nothing undeveloped, and thus drowned out of sight of land amid the multitude of crying and incongruous details. There is but one art—to omit! O if I knew how to omit, I would ask no other knowledge. A man who knew how to omit would make an Iliad of a daily paper . . ."

". . . He (the painter) goes to nature for facts, relation values—material; as a man, before writing a historical novel, reads up memoirs. But it is not by reading memoirs that he has learned the selective criterion. He has learnt that in the practice of his art, and he will never learn it well, but when disengaged from the ardent struggle of immediate representation, of realistic and *ex facto* art. He learns it in the crystallisation of day-dreams; in changing, not in copying fact; in the pursuit of the ideal, not in the study of nature. These temples of art are, as you say, inaccessible to the realistic climber. It is not by looking at the sea that you get—

'The multitudinous seas incarnadine,'

nor by looking at Mont Blanc that you find—

'And visited all night by troops of stars.'

A kind of ardour in the blood is the mother of all this; and according as this ardour is swayed by knowledge and seconded by craft, the art expression flows clear, and significance and charm, like a moon rising, are born above the barren jungle of mere symbols . . ."

". . . Continue to testify boldly against realism. Down with Dagon the fish-god! All art swings down towards imitation in these days, fatally . . ."

". . . Your remarks about the ugly are all my eye. Ugliness is only the prose of horror. It is when you are not able to write 'Macbeth' that you write 'Thérèse Raquin.' Fashions are external; the essence of art only varies

in so far as fashion widens the field of its application; art is a mill whose thirlage, in different ages, widens and contracts; but, in any case and under any fashion, the great man produces beauty, terror, and mirth, and the little man produces cleverness (personalities, psychology) instead of beauty, ugliness instead of terror, and jokes instead of mirth . . ."

His ardent love for his work never abated; fame, wealth, and the adventurous life of his last years were equally powerless to affect it. One of his best letters, written when he was thirty-three, should be pasted on the study-wall of any writer who is inclined to despond, to imagine that the game, after all, isn't worth the candle.

". . . I beg to inform you that I, Robert Louis Stevenson, author of 'Brashiana' and other works, am merely beginning to commence to prepare to make a first start in trying to understand my profession. O the height and depth of novelty and worth in any art! and O that I am privileged to swim and shoulder through such oceans! Could one get out of sight of land—all in the blue? Alas not, being anchored here in flesh, and the bonds of logic being still about us.

"But what a great space and a great air there is in these small shallows where alone we venture! and how new each sight, squall, calm, or sunrise! An art is a fine fortune, a palace in a park, a band of music, health and physical beauty; all but love—to any worthy practiser. I sleep upon my art for a pillow; I waken in my art; I am unready for death, because I hate to leave it. I love my wife, I do not know how much, nor can, nor shall, unless I lost her; but whilst I can conceive my being widowed, I refuse the offering of life without my art. I *am* not but in my art; it is me; I am the body of it merely . . .

Sursum Corda;
Heave ahead;
Here's luck.
Art and Blue Heaven;
April and God's Larks.
Green reeds and the sky-scattering river.
A stately music.
Enter God! . . ."

If Stevenson had never written another line, his letters should have been enough to win him immortality.

On re-reading the 960 odd pages of Henry James's 'Letters' after an interval of two years, I felt once again convinced that the collection would have been better if it had been smaller. Henry James poured out his heart to his friends in rich, even prodigal profusion, writing at night until one or two o'clock. Every example in the volumes has that first essential of a good letter,—each is soaked through and through

with personality; but there are too many letters which deal at enormous length with rather petty domesticities; there are too many, also, addressed to not particularly important persons and containing enthusiastic appreciations of their not particularly important works. But this cavil apart, the books are a magnificent memorial to a great and lovable character and a unique intellect. "Oh! I can't read Henry James!" One has heard a great many otherwise sensible people who have broken their shins over 'The Golden Bowl' or 'The Sacred Fount' say *that*. (They never seem to attempt to read his earlier novels and stories, which have a simplicity verging on baldness, and good plots for those who like such things.) To such unconscientious objectors the only retort is—read the 'Letters.' In his correspondence, his extraordinary zest for life, his wit, his passion for the romance of old cities and lovely environments, his acute literary perceptions, and his genius for friendship, find complete expression. One cannot write on this subject without plagiarising Mr Percy Lubbock, who has edited the 'Letters,' so I prefer to quote him. "As time goes on," says Mr Lubbock, "a kind of personal splendour shines through the correspondence, which only becomes more natural, more direct a communication of himself, as it is uttered with increasing mastery. The familiar form of the letter was changed under his hand into what may really be called a new province of art, a revelation of possibilities hitherto unexplored. Perfect in expression as they are, these letters are true extemporisations, thrown off always at great speed, as though with a single sweep of the hand, for all their richness of texture and roundness of phrase."

This is high-sounding language, but it is not exaggerated as regards the best of the letters. People, places, events — Henry James hits everything off with an absolute felicity, a serene mastery of phrase, a perfect independence of attitude. The gift came to him early. Writing from Rome when he was twenty-six, during his first visit to Europe as a grown man, he summarises his impressions in this way:—

". . . From midday to dusk I have been roaming the streets. Que vous en dirai-je? At last —for the first time—I live! It beats everything; it leaves the Rome of your fancy—your education—nowhere. It makes Venice — Florence — Oxford — London—seem like little cities of pasteboard. I went reeling and moaning thro' the streets in a fever of enjoyment. In the course of four or five hours I traversed almost the whole of Rome and got a glimpse of everything — the Forum, the Coliseum (stupendissimo!), the Pantheon, the Capitol, St Peter's, the Column of Trajan, the Castle of St

Angelo—all the Piazzas and ruins and monuments. The effect is something indescribable. For the first time I know what the picturesque is. In St Peter's I stayed some time. It's even beyond its reputation. It was filled with foreign ecclesiastics — great armies encamped in prayer on the marble plains of its pavement, — an inexhaustible physiognomical study. To crown my day, on my way home, I met his Holiness in person—driving in prodigious purple state,—sitting dim within the shadows of his coach with two uplifted benedictory fingers —like some dusky Hindoo idol in the depths of its shrine. Even if I should leave Rome to-night I should feel that I have caught the keynote of its operation on the senses. I have looked along the grassy vista of the Appian Way and seen the topmost stonework of the Coliseum sitting shrouded in the light of heaven, like the edge of an Alpine chain. I've trod the Forum, and I have scaled the Capitol. I've seen the Tiber hurrying along, as swift and dirty as history! From the high tribune of a great chapel in St Peter's I have heard in the papal choir a strange old man sing in a shrill unpleasant soprano. I've seen troops of little tonsured neophytes clad in scarlet, marching and counter-marching and ducking and flopping, like poor little raw recruits for the heavenly host. In fine, I've seen Rome, and I shall go to bed a wiser man than I last rose. . . ."

Could the sensations of an enthusiastic neophyte in that wonderful city be expressed with more gusto?

No Life of Henry James need be written, for, as Mr Lubbock points out, these letters give us the man himself absolutely—his sagacious judgment, his robust humour, his felicitous powers of witty description, and his large kindliness. To me the most interesting letters are those which he wrote during his earlier visits to Europe, when he met William Morris and his wife —"this dark, silent, medieval woman with her medieval toothache," — and Ruskin — "scared back by the grim face of reality into the world of unreason and illusion,"—and Huxley and Tennyson and Browning and Tourgueneff and Flaubert. Such encounters gave him full scope for his power of fantastic description. Of Mrs Kemble he writes:—

"Mrs Kemble has no organised surface at all; she is like a straight deep cistern, without a cover, or even, sometimes, a bucket, into which, as a mode of intercourse, one must tumble with a splash." One wonders what Mrs Kemble would have thought about this. Of another lady he writes: "She is crazy, stage-struck, scatter-brained, what the French call *extravagante;* but I can't praise her better than by saying

that though she is on the whole the greatest fool I have ever known, I like her very much . . ." He knew and admired most of the famous French writers, but their wilful mental insularity provoked him to cry: "I am pretty well saturated, and ought to have the last word about *ces gens-ci*. That last word hasn't a grain of subjection or mystery left in it; it is simply 'Chinese, Chinese, Chinese!' They are finished besotted mandarins, and their Paris is their Celestial Empire."

Though he was painstaking and almost over-tolerant in advising friends who were writers, he criticised the art of his time severely as well as acutely. Writing in 1897 of Mr Kipling, he says:—

". . . My view of his prose future has much shrunken in the light of one's increasingly observing how little of life he can make use of. Almost nothing civilised except steam and patriotism—and the latter only in verse, where I *hate* it so, especially mixed up with God and goodness, that that half spoils my enjoyment of his great talent. Almost nothing of the complicated soul or of the female form or of any question of *shades*—which latter constitute, to my sense, the real formative literary discipline. In his earliest time I thought he perhaps contained the seeds of an English Balzac; but I have quite given that up in proportion as he has come steadily from the less simple in subject to the more simple—from the Anglo-Indians to the natives, from the natives to the Tommies, from the Tommies to the quadrupeds, from the quadrupeds to the fish, and from the fish to the engines and screws. . . ."

And of Burne-Jones:—

". . . When I *do* see him, it is one of the best human pleasures that London has for me. But I don't understand his life—that is the manner and tenor of his production,—a complete *studio* existence, with doors and windows closed, and no search for impressions outside—no open air, no real daylight, and no looking out for it. The things he does in these conditions have exceeding beauty—but they seem to me to grow colder and colder,—pictured abstractions, less and less observed. Such as he is, however, he is certainly the most distinguished artistic figure among Englishmen to-day—the only one who has escaped vulgarisation and on whom claptrap has no hold. . . ."

His letters to his famous brother are touching memorials of the deep affection uniting two rare spirits which were often at variance intellectually. William James did not always evince a whole-hearted admiration for Henry's novels, and would criticise them with the frankness that was character-

istic of the family. Henry had an immense admiration for William and his work, but life, I think, interested him more than even his brother's philosophy: there are surprisingly few allusions to the latter in the correspondence.

The complete history of a unique mind—there can be no higher praise for an autobiography than this, and Henry James's letters are a masterpiece of self-revelation. If these desultory notes induce any one who has formerly shied at this great writer's work to read Mr Lubbock's volumes, they will have attained their object.

Unless the art of writing is destined to perish before the advance of the film, wireless, telepathy, poison-gas, and other modern amenities, we may safely conclude that good letters are being and will be written. Even I have known half a dozen people with whom it was a delight to correspond. To give only one instance: the letters of Rupert Brooke, usually dashed off in a vein of gay *bravura*, were a joy to all his friends, and it is to be hoped that a selection from them will be published. There must, too, be many people living, not necessarily authors, who have a natural gift for epistolary self-expression, and possess both humour and intelligence. What of Lord Morley and Sir Arthur Balfour? What of Mr Conrad, Mr Wells, Mr Chesterton, and Lord Birkenhead? What, above all, of Mr Shaw? I feel certain that his letters are wonderful, but if I unfortunately survive him, may Heaven preserve me from the office of editor.

ECHOES FROM THE MARSHES.

(BEING FURTHER TALES OF THE MA'ADAN.)

BY FULANAIN.

BIMBASHI.

He was so curiously like a dear old "dug-out" major who served with my regiment in the early days of the war that at our first meeting I dubbed him "Bimbashi"—the equivalent of major in the Turkish army. White hair, hooked nose, deep-set eyes, and thin erect figure made up a striking resemblance, which was heightened by the fact that, when I first saw him, he seemed to be standing at the head of his company.

I had been settling some small dispute or other in the village of the Bait Yassin, and as I came out of the headman's hut my eye was caught by the tall figure of an old man on the opposite bank of the little stream. He stood perfectly still, gazing at the first British officer he had ever seen in the marshes; and behind him, equally intent on a sight of the unusual visitor, stood a crowd of small boys. There were perhaps forty of them, all stark naked, all breathlessly on tiptoe and rigid with excitement. They seemed to be standing to attention, awaiting the word of command from their leader; and turning to the headman beside me I asked, "Who is the old Bimbashi?"

To my surprise a roar of laughter greeted the question. The marshmen's sense of humour, always easily roused by the mildest joke if sufficiently obvious, seemed to be tickled by the epithet, of which apparently they saw the appropriateness.

"Bimbashi—the Hakim calls him the Bimbashi," they repeated one to the other, like the children they are. And so it came about that old Miskail became known to me and to the whole tribe as "al Bimbashi."

My tent had been pitched on the river bank near the edge of the marsh, for I was making a two or three days' stay in this neighbourhood. Just what had brought me there I forget—some series of trivial, unimportant little duties. All I do remember is that I had with me a good deal in the way of sugar, tea, coffee, and coloured-cotton stuff, as presents for the well-disposed.

That evening my Arab ser-

vant announced that a man wished to see me.

"Who is it?" I asked.

"He says he is a Bimbashi," answered my servant, half-puzzled, half-amused.

"Let him come in," I said.

Stooping his tall height to enter the tent door, Miskail entered. He was a fine-looking man, still, in spite of his white hair, handsome, with the dark, virile, good looks of the marsh Arab. But now that I saw him more closely, I could well believe what I had been told that morning, that he would have been headman of the Bait Yassin if it had not been that the tribe considered him slightly mad. His dark eyes were strangely bright, and his hands, unusually delicate and fine for a marshman, were the restless nervous hands of the highly-strung.

Miskail had come to unfold a wonderful scheme, an idea of his own, which was to be of incalculable help in my work of keeping down raids on river traffic. He reminded me that during the last month there had been a recrudescence of these raids, most of which had taken place in the reach between Hamdan and Gurmat Shergi, not far distant from my present camp. Then, stammering with eagerness and excitement, he disclosed his plan: he would enrol, in a little army of his own, a number of the small boys I had seen round him that afternoon, and of them would form patrols to watch the river bank and give warning of thieves.

I was strongly tempted to laugh, for it seemed absurd to think that the problem might be solved by a crowd of naked little village boys. But Miskail urged his scheme with sound arguments.

"What do these boys, Sahib," he said, "from sunrise to sunset, aye, and during the night as well? They are always in mischief, often learning to be thieves even as their fathers are. And while they play, the raiders creep silently through the reeds, and lie in wait by the river's edge. Only by setting a good watch can your Honour prevent this; and what eyes are keener and sharper than the eyes of youth? I can place at your service a hundred pairs of sharp eyes—eyes, too, that since first they opened on the world have been accustomed to gaze at reeds and rushes and glinting water."

"You want a yearly present such as I give to Awasha," I said, half in jest. But old Miskail was deeply shocked.

"Sahib, it is true that I am fond of tobacco," he said; "but this service, which your Honour will find is a great service, I offer with no thought of a reward. I wish only to serve the great Hakuma.[1] If it were not for the jealousy

[1] Government.

of others," he went on plaintively, "I should be the headman of my Bait. Let me be the Bimbashi of the Hakim's river watchers."

Anyhow, I reflected, he could do no harm, and he might do some good. I agreed to give his plan a trial, and sent him off, full of enthusiasm and importance, with a bag of tobacco in his hand.

. . . . . .

Whether Miskail was never off duty, or whether he somehow contrived always to be warned of my coming, I don't know. But whenever I chanced to pass down his reach of the river, I never failed to be met by the old Bimbashi and his patrol of youthful watchmen. They would run along the bank, keeping pace with the little launch, and chanting some such war-cry as, "We are the eyes of the high Wali!" over and over again in their shrill treble voices. With them their "birthday suits" were *de rigueur;* so much as a piece of string round the waist was condemned as bad form. At their head ran Miskail, his brown bisht flying behind him, the kafiyah which should have formed his head-gear brandished aloft as though it were a mace or double-headed axe, while his deep voice set the refrain for the band of enthusiasts behind him.

When voices died away and footsteps lagged—for it was hard work to keep pace with the launch—the Bimbashi would turn on his little naked followers, waving his arms in a frenzy, stamping his feet in time to the song, and shouting the refrain still more loudly. Thus encouraged, the shrill voices would once more take up the chant, and the thin brown legs make heroic efforts to keep up with their indefatigable leader.

Sometimes I would stop the launch, and Miskail would proudly report that no thefts had taken place in his reach of the river. At first he was inordinately proud of his triumph. Later I noticed an air of doubtfulness underlying the satisfaction. He seemed hardly able to believe that he could be a success in life at last. He seemed to think it too good to be true.

"You are certain, Sahib," he would say, "that no theft has been reported—not even a little one? Will you swear it on your head?"

Poor old Bimbashi! One evening, in the gathering dusk, the nervous serang of an upgoing boat mistook his patrol of watchers for a marauding band, and opened fire. Miskail was killed, shot through the heart, and his "army" dispersed, never to come together again.

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while I remained in that district. But perhaps I am wrong. Perhaps the eager ghost of old Miskail still rushes up and down the river bank, urging on a band of little naked ghosts to greater and still greater efforts, lest any theft should occur to break the spotless record of the reach between Hamdan and Gurmat Shergi. Who knows?

FAREWELL.

"Not visit us! But, Sahib, what of your promise?" exclaimed old Zair, headman of the Bait Laibat.

"My promise?" I repeated vaguely. Surely I had not promised to visit the very dull village of this very uninteresting old man?

"Sahib, I have many witnesses," he cried. "Your Honour had been to visit the Bait Attar, to settle a fasl, and I and my brother came to the river——" He entered into a wealth of detail.

It was too true: I had rashly given the promise. Somehow a visit to the Bait Laibat must be got in before I left the country; and, as they had lately moved to the river bank, I arranged to stop for a few minutes on my way down-stream for the last time, and drink tea and coffee in Zair's hut.

A last journey, through scenes which have become as familiar as one's own home, is always something of a melancholy proceeding. As the paddle-boat made her way down-stream between the crumbling mud banks, on which the same old tortoises were sunning themselves as they had always done, even the flat emptiness of the country on either side seemed to possess a certain charm. I found myself noting afresh the graceful bearing of the village women in their scarlet and black draperies, the softly-blended browns and fawns of the groups of cattle on the river bank, the transparent clearness of the atmosphere, which seemed to intensify every hue and sharpen every outline of the picturesque village scenes.

Memories of the past four years crowded on my mind as the river slowly unwound its serpent-like coils before us. The familiar places recalled each its half-forgotten story—tales probably more than half apocryphal, but gravely and in all good faith recounted to me, at various times, by the Arabs of the neighbourhood.

Here was a clump of stunted willows and blackberry bushes, hiding from sight the small reed hut built over the tomb of Saiyid Khalifa. This worthy should have died a Crœsus, for, having conceived the brilliant plan of selling small pieces

of heaven for a few majidis, he travelled among the credulous tribesmen, doing a roaring trade; for who would doubt the power of so holy a descendant of the Prophet? But a certain Christian merchant, who was in the habit of sending out pedlars to sell small luxuries among the tribes, found that his trade was suffering, since, when pieces of heaven were for sale, no one had any money to spare for sugar, dates, and tobacco. A marshman who had purchased enough of heaven to squat in would proceed to save up his money, to buy a larger piece in which he might lie full-length; then he would wish for a similar privilege for his favourite wife. It was clear to the merchant that this must be stopped, and he in his turn conceived a brilliant idea. Going to the Saiyid in all humility, he said that he knew quite well that it was useless for him, a Christian, to ask to buy a piece of heaven; but might he be allowed instead a piece of hell—all of it, if possible? The avaricious Saiyid, knowing that hell was at a discount, gladly closed with his offer, and gave him a sanad, saying that the whole of hell had been sold to him. Then the Christian sent out many mashhuf-loads of his goods among the tribes, bidding his pedlars announce his purchase to every one. The tribesmen were quick to see the point: why save up to buy a piece of heaven if every place in hell had already been booked? They were safe, for they knew of only two alternatives as regards the future state; and Saiyid Khalifa sold no more pieces of heaven.

The story illustrates the extraordinary credulity of the average tribesman; but the townsman, though he affects to scoff, is in his turn by no means free from superstition. I remember one of my farrashes who paid a whole lira—over fifteen days' wages—to a holy man for a cure for his son's fever. The Saiyid wrote on a piece of paper a few words from the Koran, instructing the man to wash off the ink and give it to the child to drink; and the cure was (with the inevitable proviso, "insha Allah") guaranteed!

The tomb of Saiyid Khalifa was left far behind, and we passed a desolate-looking brick-kiln, which stands, gaunt and solitary, marking the site of a town planned by the Turks. Neither the bricks nor the town ever materialised, but the kiln remains, a mournful monument of an unfulfilled project.

Now we passed the garden of Khalil al Sabunchi, or rather the garden which was his until he was forced to part with it. For a neighbouring shaikh, so the story goes, coveting the garden, offered one hundred liras for it, an offer which the owner indignantly refused, since its true value was at least

three hundred. That night one of his cultivators was murdered, and in the morning the shaikh offered ninety liras for the garden. A few nights later a second cultivator died; and eventually the owner accepted seventy liras. So were gardens bought and sold in the days of the Turks!

A little farther down-stream we came to the remains of the mud fort in which Jawad Agha, a Kurd, set himself up some two or three years before the war, defying the world in general and the Government in particular. While, after my arrival as assistant political officer, I was still wondering how best to deal with this wild figure and his band of well-armed desperadoes, I heard that he had been murdered by one of my shabanahs, who, as if to save me from the trouble of deciding how at once to punish and reward him, promptly deserted, and was never seen again.

Now we passed the village in which lived Hatim bin Yahiyah, who came to me claiming a pension from Government on account of his "valuable services rendered to her late Majesty Queen Victoria"—in support of which claim he produced a letter, signed, as far as I remember, by Lord Salisbury, and announcing that the Queen was graciously pleased to send the sum of £100, to lighten the lot of his starving community during the famine of 18—. So much for Hatim's "valuable services"!

At length we reached the cluster of reed huts lately set up by the Bait Laibat, and, in accordance with my promise to their headman, I persuaded the captain of the ship to bank in for ten minutes. The village was *en fête* in my honour; every one seemed cleaner than usual, and the men wore white disdashas under their bishts. In front of the hut to which old Zair led me stood a large sleek buffalo, its black hide shining in the sun. Round its neck hung a string of blue beads, and each hoof was decorated with a little anklet of silver bells. The creature had the grace to look excessively self-conscious. A dreadful thought struck me: was this to be the parting gift of the Bait Laibat?

Zair's first question, after the lengthy preliminaries of greeting, told me that my fears were not groundless.

"Hakim," he said, "is there roba in Angleterra?"

I told him that I had never seen this delicacy (which is the curdled milk of the buffalo, and the marsh Arabs' staple food) until I came to Mesopotamia.

"Then," said old Zair, speaking very quickly, for he knew that my stay was to be a short one, "I will tell a story to your Honour. Once a Ma'aidi went on a long journey across the sea, and after many days he came to a great city, far away

on the other side of Al Hind. Now the king of the land was in the habit of taking presents from all who visited him. And this Ma'aidi was a poor man like ourselves, and the only gift he had to offer was a bowl of roba; but when the king saw that his offering was such a poor one, he was filled with anger, and ordered the giver to be slain. The Ma'aidi trembled very greatly when he heard this, but as he was led away from the presence of the king, he cried out, "I beseech your Excellency to taste it, to taste but a little of it!" And the sword was above his head when a messenger came running, to bid him return to the king's presence. So he found the great king sitting with an empty bowl beside him, and crying, 'Give me more, for it is very good.' And the king promised that if that Ma'aidi brought him a bowlful every morning, he alone should be permitted to sell roba to all his subjects. And all the people clamoured for roba, so that the Ma'aidi became the richest man in all the land, and the king gave him many honours.

"And for this reason, Sahib," went on Zair, "that your Honour may likewise become rich, we have chosen the finest of our buffaloes for you to take to Angleterra."

I thanked them for the kindness of their thought, and duly admired the beast, racking my brains the while for an excuse. Suddenly I had an inspiration.

"What will she eat?" I asked.

"Bardi, of course," answered Zair, surprised that I should ask such an elementary question.

"But in England," I said, "there is no bardi."

"Brother of Basha! No bardi!" exclaimed the old headman, while several other voices were raised in amazement. They could not have been more surprised if I had said that in England every one walked on his head instead of on his feet. But the situation was saved: I made my farewells, and re-embarked without the buffalo.

As we moved off all the men from the village ran along the bank, shouting and yelling, and waving their rifles in the air. Still thinking of old Zair, and wondering what grain of truth might be in his story of the bowl of roba, I watched them.

Suddenly I saw two of the racing figures come into violent collision. One, a youngster of not more than eighteen, fell to the ground; but, quickly picking himself up, he burst into what was doubtless, though I could not hear the words, a torrent of abuse. For a moment the two stood shouting at each other; then the elder man raised his rifle, and brought it down with a violent blow on the other's head. He rolled over, either stunned or dead.

The shouting of the crowd was now in a different key. They gathered round the fallen man, and the noise grew fiercer. I asked the captain to bank in again, but my visit to the village had delayed his boat over-long already, and he could not allow me any more time. A bend in the river hid the swaying yelling mob from my sight.

It was my last glimpse of the Ma'adan—typical of them and their marshes; for just as quickly as the wide expanse of smooth blue water is lashed into fierce waves by a sudden violent squall, so may the most peaceable joyous crowd of marshmen be transformed by a word and a blow into a fierce and angry mob, swayed only by one impulse—the primitive desire to kill.

If I close my eyes I can still hear, echoing across the waters, the laughter which is like that of care-free children changed suddenly to shouts of wild anger, the quiet hum of daily life broken by the crack of rifle-shots, the pleasant sound of the reeds rustling against my mashhuf, drowned by the wails of weeping women.

ON THE RUPUNUNI TRAIL.

BY MRS CECIL CLEMENTI.

THERE was bustle and babel at Sprostons' A.B.C. Wharf, but it faded away behind us when at eight o'clock on a bright tropical morning our steamer left Georgetown to pursue its leisurely course up the Demerara river. It is not an exciting journey, but there is a dreamy peace about river-travelling in British Guiana which, if you put all idea of hurry out of your mind, becomes fascinatingly restful. At first the land on both sides is absolutely flat, and a dense fringe of jungle growth screens the banks. The high chimneys of sugar-factories may be seen on either hand, and occasional glimpses of cocoa-nut groves or of pale-green sugar-fields are caught where a creek or drainage outlet has reduced the riverside curtain of vegetation. But, after twenty miles or so, the big estates and all regular cultivation are left behind. In Dutch days, more than a century ago, the seat of Government was on First Island, eighteen miles up the Demerara, and the land on both sides of the river was cultivated much higher up than it is to-day; but, after the English annexation in 1803, the estates moved largely to the coast, and the river banks are now chiefly the property of small-holders, who only occupy beneficially a narrow fringe of land.

There is a good deal of life on the waterway. The steamer is constantly held up by people coming off to her in bateaux and corials with passengers, parcels, and mail, the latter often coming perilously near a watery grave when a sudden rush of river breeze whirls the letters up from the bottom of the light craft wherein creole nonchalance has loosely flung them. Sometimes, too, a cow has to be hoisted aboard from a small boat, when everybody gives advice, and peaceful monotony is pleasurably dashed with incident for all save the cow. The inhabitants of the river banks — bovianders, as they are called—have, I think, a very comfortable place in the sun, and their little homes form quaintly pretty pictures *en vignette*. The bush is cleared from the riverside, and a little plank runs out into the stream to form a landing-stage. The huts are of rough boards, thatched with russet palm-leaf, and stand on pleasant carpets of grass. One's eye rejoices in the absence of jungle, whilst clumps of delicious plumy bamboo, or a few graceful palm-trees, which look as though deliberately posing, complete the picture. The provision-fields are away behind the

houses, and can rarely be seen from the steamer, but there is a more or less spasmodic effort at cultivation on both banks. The people are almost amphibious; the river is their only road, and the smallest child navigates his little corial. The sleepy tide of the imperceptibly-moving river makes this mode of progression easy and comfortable, and for people troubled with no ambitions it must be an ideal existence. About forty miles from the coast a line of sand-hills seems to indicate the seaboard of prehistoric times, when the rich alluvial flats had not yet been deposited by muddy currents from the mouths of the Amazon and Orinoco. From this point onwards the scenery improves. The banks rise steadily on either hand, and beautiful tree-ferns vary the monotonous riverside jungle. There are low hills crowned by big forest trees, telling of their mighty brethren in the far interior, and greenheart logs lie steeped in the water waiting to be shipped. They cannot be drifted down-stream in the usual fashion, as greenheart does not float. Sometimes the logs are loaded into steamers and schooners which come up-river for the timber; sometimes they are lashed alongside punts, and so conveyed to the coast. The sight of a punt with its thatched shelter amidships, and the crew snugly ensconced in hammocks, makes one feel that haste and energy are both vulgar and absurd. The slow stream moves the punt down inch by inch; an incoming flood-tide even drifts it back. But there is always the ebb; and why should people exert themselves in a land of lotus and *mañana*?

This impression fades, however, when opposite Wismar, sixty miles from the coast, the tall water-tower of Mackenzie Settlement is seen. The Demerara Bauxite Company has its mines, or rather quarries, at Akyma, a few miles farther up the river, whence their own railway line, some ten miles long, brings the ore down to Mackenzie. Here, in a splendid and up-to-date crushing and drying plant, the pink-coloured ore is passed from belt to belt, to be first crushed, then dried in huge metal cylinders, and finally swung up into a high riverside shoot, whence it is dumped straight on board ocean-going steamers lying beside the Company's quay. Near by are the workmen's houses, which are really model dwelling-places, completely mosquito-screened and raised high above the ground on piles which stand in "oil-wells," to prevent ants from climbing in. The married quarters consist of separate buildings for each family, and arrangements are being made for a school. There is also a fine baseball ground. The Company employ an experienced doctor to give his whole time to their settlements. Drainage and sanitation are carefully contrived, bush cleared away,

and every possible precaution for health is taken. Half a mile above Mackenzie is Fair's Rust, the administrative headquarters, where the white employees have their dwellings. Here our party was most hospitably received, and we spent a cool and comfortable night. During the day it is considerably hotter up-river than on the coast, where the sea-breezes relieve the sultriness; but the delicious coolness of a night, when you actually require a blanket, makes ample amends for this.

Next morning a quick-moving little motor-launch flashed us down-stream to Arakwa Landing, a mile below the northern boundary of Mackenzie, where horses were awaiting us. Arakwa at present is only a clearing beside the river; but the track, which has just been cut to open up the vast areas of ranching-land, hitherto practically unexplored, runs continuously from this unassuming little landing almost due south for more than three hundred miles to Dadanawa. Mr H. P. C. Melville, who inhabited for nearly thirty years the Dadanawa savannahs near Brazil, through which the Rupununi river runs, had some 30,000 head of cattle there, when, in 1917, it was decided to make an endeavour to open up the country. He had previously been unable to reach the coast of his own colony, save by a long and toilsome journey down the Rupununi and Essequebo rivers, much broken by rapids and cataracts. The up-stream passage usually took about a month, and cost more than a hundred pounds. This method of travel made all outlet for cattle impossible, and cut off the beautiful and healthy savannah country almost completely from the coast. Therefore, the Colonial Government decided to entrust Mr Melville himself with the task of cutting a trail, over which cattle could be driven from his own ranch down to the Berbice river at Takama. Over three hundred miles of country had to be traversed, and the nature of this country was quite unknown. Many and loud were the prophecies of failure; and since most people believed the interior of the colony to be one unbroken tangle of forest and swamp, only a few dared to hope that Mr Melville, with the paltry £10,000 at his disposal, could possibly succeed in his task.

Mr Melville began his work in October 1917, and traced the line of the cattle-track from Dadanawa on the Rupununi through open savannah to the westernmost spur of the Kanuku Mountains, where they nearly touch the Takutu river, which divides British Guiana from Brazil. For a short distance at this point the road had to be cut through forest; but then it swung back once more through open grass country past the confluence of the Ireng and Takutu rivers to rejoin the Rupununi

at Annai, where the administrative headquarters of this southernmost district of the colony will soon be established. This section of the cattle-track is 129 miles long, and almost the whole of it runs through grassy prairies. At Annai the trail plunges into dense primeval forests that cover the whole country between the Burro-burro and Essequebo rivers, and with the exception of the small Surama savannah, the line had to be cut for the next seventy-six miles through solid jungle. Then at Kurupukari a ferry was needed across the Essequebo, which is here half a mile wide. Unfortunately for British Guiana, this great river, which ought to form a highway to the southern country, is so broken up by cataracts and rapids that it is useless for steam navigation. The problem of avoiding the Essequebo is one of the chief difficulties in opening communications into the interior. Accordingly Mr Melville, leaving the Essequebo, carried his line across to Canister Falls, near the headwaters of the Demerara, cutting through another twenty miles of forest. But here the jungle had been swept by a tremendous fire, and the track runs through a ghastly desolation of charred trunks. There is an easy ford of the Demerara below Canister Falls, after which the toilsome business of cutting a way through dense forest continued for another fifty-five miles to Yawakuri Creek, in the Berbice watershed. Then suddenly, to his surprise and delight, Mr Melville found that he had again emerged into beautiful open prairies. Save by the banks of creeks, he encountered no more forest over the whole of the next forty miles to the Berbice at Takama, from which point that river is navigable to the sea, so that the problem of providing a means of access for cattle to the coast had now been solved.

By great good fortune nature has provided that the whole of this route, 322 miles long, should be almost level, although it crosses the watersheds of four large river systems—namely, those of the Amazon, Essequebo, Demerara, and Berbice. Another piece of luck was that Mr Melville contrived to find a gap in the extensive Iwokrama mountain range, which, as he discovered, ran athwart his track between the Essequebo and the Burro-burro rivers, and which might have proved a formidable obstacle. The trail was completed as far as Takama in April 1919, and the expenditure involved was within the estimated cost.

The Government then resolved that, as Takama is 103 miles from the coast, the cattle-track should be carried right on northwards to connect with the main roads of the colony, which extend to a point twenty-three miles south of Georgetown; and that an offset should be made to bring the

trail out to the Demerara river near Mackenzie, the highest point attainable by ocean-going steamers. This task was assigned to Mr E. A. Haynes, the Commissioner of the Rupununi District, who, during the first half of 1921, cut the track as far as Arakwa Landing. It remains to complete the last link in the chain, a matter of thirty-seven miles only; and when this has been done—early in 1922, as it is hoped—direct overland communication from the coast into Brazil will have been established.

In the freshness of an early morning we turned our backs on the Demerara river, and set off from Arakwa on the trail. We were a party of five riders, with a groom on a spare horse. These horses had come from Dadanawa, the stock being bred in Amazonas, whose ranching industry is foster-mother to that of the colony's southern savannahs. In this country there is a magic lure in the word *southward*. When one's face is turned south all the world seems to lie ahead—all wonderful South America, as yet uncharted and unsubdued by man, so that the mind can run riot in delightful imaginings. True, on leaving Arakwa we faced east, but we knew that after twelve miles we should run into the main southward track.

For the first five miles the trail passed through a dense jungle of secondary growth, the result of a big forest fire, which swept along the river-side in 1911; but it led us gradually uphill, and we obtained charming backward glimpses of the tree-tops and low hills on the divide between the Essequebo and the Demerara. Soon, however, we entered virgin forest, and appreciated its grateful shade. The golden sunshine traced lovely patterns on the russet earth, and the heavenly sweetness of the air made us fill our lungs and rejoice. Great pains have been taken to make the road alignment as direct as possible; and, save for a few deviations to avoid a small creek-head or some such obstacle, the trail runs pretty well in a straight line. It has not been metalled at all; only the bush to a width of fifteen feet has been cut down, and all stumps carefully cleared. But the forest-floor affords delightfully springy going, both for men and horses. Occasional large trees have been left standing in the track, which add greatly to the charm. We admired the magnificent bare trunks, and in the case of *mora*-trees, the great buttresses they fling out round their bases to keep steady the balance of 150 feet above ground, when the roots spread only one or two feet below the soil.

We came along very gently, chiefly at a walk, and halted at the tenth mile beside a small sluggish stream with no particular name to it. We

had seen the loads of food and baggage distributed among our sixteen carriers before starting, so we hoped that the men would soon be after us, and that, the midday meal over, we should get off again in good time to make the savannah-camp promised to us for the night. Our halting-place was uninviting, and we were troubled by the disagreeable attentions of very large mosquitoes with steel-blue heads and white "socks," besides other insects more interesting than agreeable. However, it came on to rain heavily, and we had to seek a couple of small shelters within the forest, where we made a dense smoke of smouldering leaves to keep the pests at bay.

The carriers were under the guidance of one Cornelius, a charming old Arawak inhabitant of Wismar; and had he been in charge of a convoy of his own people, he would probably have been able to bring them along all right. But the men were a mixed lot, some black and some aboriginal, so that the inevitable disorganisation of a first day's march made itself fully felt. Cornelius did not arrive till nearly 3 P.M., and then in a state of high disgust because one of the negroes had actually thrown down his load of tarpaulins and decamped after the first mile or so of the journey. There was nothing for it but to remain where we were for the night. Some of the party wandered along the road with guns in search of a possible parrot or marm, whilst I watched Cornelius remedy the loss of the tarpaulin by building a most delightful Arawak "house" for the accommodation of my husband and myself, and the other men repaired the two existing shelters. Cornelius's "house" was quite different from anything Makusis, Arekunas, or Patamonas had ever constructed for us. He first cut and planted four sturdy uprights, equipped with small forks at the apex; then laid horizontal poles between the tops of these, after which he shaped a roof with a wondrously clever arrangement of spars laid one over the other, securing the whole with *one* knot of bush-rope, which kept the entire contraption steady. Then he thatched the edifice with turu-banna palm-leaves, built a couple of small tables, known as "babricots," and brought in a "hat-stand"—*i.e.*, a young sapling with its bark entirely peeled off and its branches lopped six inches from the stem. The swiftness and deftness of Indian fingers is really marvellous. At dinner-time we found that forks had been forgotten, but we were soon supplied with excellent wooden ones.

The mosquitoes mercifully retired a couple of hours before dark, and the rain having cleared off, we could see the tree-tops bathed in golden light as the sun dropt downwards. In the forest the sky can only be seen through a

maze of branches far aloft, and one almost believes oneself to be a beetle crawling round the bases of the imprisoning trees. Nights in the forest are always cool, and we slept beautifully. The moonlight filtering down seemed a sort of silvery mist about us.

Next morning we moved off early, the dew shining on the green bracken by the roadside. Straight as a dart the track went up and down gentle declivities, and after a couple of miles we found ourselves in a sort of savannah, covered with low scrub, which we welcomed joyfully as heralding the open grass plains our eyes were aching to see. The air was keen and glorious, and though the direct rays of the sun were very hot, we found the open country dry and bracing, and seldom really sultry.

The going was beautifully smooth, and our ponies were tactfully prevailed on to canter. But these rough animals have somewhat painful paces; and, unless you can induce them really to stretch themselves at a gallop, the only alternative to a walking pace is a most soul-shaking joggle, when the rider gasps and cries for mercy.

Soon after leaving the forest we ran into the main north to south track, and swung off southward at a right angle on the direct line for Brazil. Northward the road continues for a little distance and then stops, waiting to be carried over the remaining thirty-seven miles to meet the motor-road from Georgetown, which runs up the Demerara's east bank.

Soon after 9.30 A.M. we reached the camp at Mahaicony Head, where we had intended to sleep the previous night. The springs that feed the head-waters of the Mahaicony Creek are all round about in the sand, and gradually collect in little dark water-holes, marked by beautiful Eta palms and "islands" of trees. Near our camp was a fringe of the forest, in whose setting the creek wanders all the way down to the rice-fields of the coast. The thick jungle which lines the banks of all the colonial rivers has hitherto effectually hidden the open country behind; and wherever on the savannah you see forest looming up on the horizon, there you may be certain of finding a big creek.

We rested several hours in the Mahaicony Camp whilst all the carriers came in and made breakfast for themselves and us. Here were two "houses," built after the fashion of Cornelius. One served as kitchen and one as dining-room. A sleepy labaria in the kitchen roof, feeling the heat of the fire below him, fell down and was promptly despatched. This was the only snake any one saw on the journey.

We rode off again at 2 P.M., having seen all our merry men precede us; and the ride to our night's camp was quite

delightful. The scrub became less and less, the open grass-spaces dotted with flowers more and more; the going was excellent, and under a cloudy grey sky with the cool breeze and rain-scud in our faces, even the ponies became infected with *joie-de-vivre*, and scampered along in fine style. At 5 P.M. we reached Hope Camp, two little wind-swept palm-leaf shelters, set amidst the big open plain, a sign that man has taken possession. They looked so small and lonely, yet indescribably snug and homelike in the empty land. When the road-trace was being taken across this savannah, a black man, named Hope, strayed and got lost. He was found again on this spot completely bewildered, hence its name.

We greatly enjoyed Hope Camp, and so did the horses: the feed was good all round, and they seemed to be pasturing and snorting gently to themselves the greater part of the night. My pony, indeed, had a rather troublesome tendency to eat the houses, which were apparently composed of some leaf particularly to his fancy! Near by are the head-waters of the Kerimeru Creek, a small tributary of the Kamaetin, which flows into the Wiruni, so that we had now reached the Berbice watershed. All round the camp we had a splendid view of open savannah, and a great red full moon rose out of it, as out of the sea, whilst we were at supper. The next morning, as we got up, she was sinking, a gleaming silver globe, into the morning mists. The air was deliciously crisp and cool. Indeed in the savannah country it seems only in the middle of the day that one suffers from the heat. Then it is certainly very hot, though perhaps in other months than August it may be less so. The only drawback to Hope Camp, as we saw it, was the presence of chigoes in the sand. In spite of great care never to put a bare foot on the ground, some of these hateful insects managed somehow to work their way into our feet. There were no mosquitoes, only a few sandflies about, but the Indians say that at certain seasons this latter plague can be terrible, especially when the moon is bright. The only relief then is to abandon camp and take refuge under the trees round the creek-head.

Next morning we rode off very early. There was heavy mist over everything, and countless dew-lit spiders' webs covered the grass in all directions. According to the Arawaks, this foretells a hot day, as the spiders are putting out their "cassava-bread" to bake in the sun. We had a perfectly delightful early ride over grass savannah all the way, the ponies going extremely well. Soon after 9 A.M. we reached the Wili-katurin Creek, where we halted in the forest fringe on its banks. The ford is about fourteen feet wide, and

the water flows with a gentle current, making an ideal bathing-place. The black bush-water of this country is exquisite to the touch, so very soft and cool. Over sand-banks, it shows a beautiful amber, and its reflection of tree and sky is marvellously bright and clear. There is a local saying that if you eat labba-flesh and drink creek-water you will return again and again to the colony, and I shall always have a yearning for the feel of bush-water wrapping and caressing one's limbs in its rich depths. There must be some dark-eyed, dark-skinned fairy of the creeks, hidden in the lily-laden retreats of the great forests, who hears the loud voices and unaccustomed laughter of the white folk with astonished alarm, used as she has been to complete solitude, scarce broken by the gentle plash of a silent Indian's paddle as he steers his frail woodskin over lonely streams; and I think only a Chinese artist of olden time painting on silk could adequately render the grace of the water-lilies floating on the still amber pools. They abide in my mind with haunting charm. We spent some hours in the camp beside the Wili-katurin. As the day advanced we realised that the spiders had shown much prescience in deciding it was to be a *baking* day. It certainly was most unusually hot until about 2.30 P.M., when a heavy thunderstorm fell, and gave us a welcome shower-bath besides cooling the atmosphere.

At 3 P.M. we mounted and rode up over the hill which slopes down to the creek, and found ourselves again in savannah, and such beautiful savannah, stretching away as far as the eye could see. We rode over it for a couple of hours, until we came to the forest beside the Wiruni river, which is quite a considerable stream, about 110 feet wide, with a depth of seven feet. All the little streams we had passed since leaving Mahaicony head drain into the Wiruni. When we saw it on that grey evening, its swift-moving black water and the tall forest on its banks gave it a somewhat sinister expression. It afforded very pleasant bathing, however; and when a heavy tropical shower burst suddenly overhead, we were able to keep out of the rain in the river, though our garments on the bank were not so fortunate.

Our camp for the night was by the roadside, about a quarter of a mile from the river. The forest was very close and high, but lovely groups of palms broke the dense dark lines of serried trees. The pale pillar-like stems of royal palms and the clustered grace of slender manicoles put me in mind of dim cathedral aisles, whilst the vivid green of their great tufts of foliage lit up the gloomy jungle background. But in spite of this we should have much preferred a savannah camp. The ground had

clearly been swampy, and the floors of the "houses" were corduroyed with palm-stems, peculiarly uncomfortable to walk on, and still more so as a basis for a camp-bed. Certainly a hammock can have immense advantages as a sleeping-place in this country. The camp was also full of insects with long waving feelers, and an alarming capacity for jumping. They did not bite, but I could not regard them with any enthusiasm as bedfellows, when I found that a large number had managed to find their way into my mosquito-net. About midnight I woke to rejoice in a scene that was almost unreal in its strange beauty. The moon was very brilliant, and her silver radiance shone amidst glorious shadow that seemed to be sapphire light. No breath stirred. The forest stood in enchanted stillness, save where fireflies flitted among the palms.

The next morning, the third day of our joyous pilgrimage, we crossed the Wiruni in bateaux — the pontoon-bridge which is planned not being yet *in situ*. The horses had swum across the evening before. There were some splendid forest trees on the right bank, but less than a mile brought us out into the open again, and the country was more beautiful than anything we had yet seen. The rolling savannahs lay all around us, green as heart could wish, and starred with flowers. "Islands" of trees gave the gentle contours an almost English appearance, and the air came sweet and crisp against our faces. Truly, a fair land and a goodly heritage for men of pluck and energy in the near future!

Riding across this country, freely as one chose to go, was a delightful experience. The trail over the savannah is only marked now and again by a square piece of kerosene-tin nailed to the top of a pole. You catch sight of the white glint against the sky-line and ride for it, and from that point you pick up the next one half a mile or so ahead. My husband, in 1919, walked the entire 322 miles from Takama to Dadanawa, and I also have travelled sufficiently on Shanks his mare over British Guiana trails, so that we both appreciated keenly the luxury of having four legs under us.

About 11 A.M. we reached Waranana, where the Rupununi Development Company have a fattening-station for cattle on their way from Dadanawa; and here we made our head-quarters for a couple of days. The Company's house was kindly placed at our disposal —a real wooden house with wooden walls and thatched roof; but we preferred our bush methods, with the air of heaven free to enter on all sides, and Cornelius's architecture was therefore once more requisitioned. A driving rain over the savannah might have made things awkward for us,

but the few showers which passed over the country kindly spared the centre of our habitations. The chief annoyance in this part of the country is the swarm of *Berbice flies*, tiny insects which do not bite, but keep up such an endless irritation by settling on face and hands that any residents here would quite certainly need screened houses. The flies only annoy by daylight, and a breeze soon dispels them. One is also free from them on horseback, as then they see fit to persecute the horse and leave the rider in peace.

The hours from midday to 3 P.M. were, as usual, very hot, but gusts of breeze across the savannah relieved us. About 4.30 P.M. my husband and I sauntered off on horseback to spy out the land and to enjoy the evening light and freshness. The others strolled about over the savannah with their guns near the edge of a wood, where the white-water springs of the Waranana creek rise. A quail and a maroodi rewarded their zeal. By moonlight they tried to stalk labba in the wood with an electric torch to attract and then dazzle their quarry; but the attempt was not successful. The evening and night were deliciously cool, and the dome of stars over the great silent plain was a wonderful sight, especially before the moon rose. The air is so dry that the horizon is entirely clear, and the Pole-star just above it could plainly be seen.

Next morning we were in our saddles soon after 6 A.M. It was "misting" in true Devonshire fashion, and the air was glorious. We rode south to the Ituni river for five miles—that is to say, it was five miles in the direct line passing the survey benchmarks — but we made wide circles, enjoying the lovely country. A thick belt of forest shrouds the Ituni; and when the cattle-trail was being traced, great care was taken to ford the creek at a point where this barrier offered least obstacle. A good place was eventually found, and a greenheart bridge has now been thrown across. The forest extends for about half a mile only on each side of the bridge. We rode over and up again into open country. Fascinating indeed lay the path before us; strong was the lure to follow on southward, but time forbade. We must needs go back to Waranana, thence to seek the coast by way of the Berbice river. But I felt altogether envious of those of our party who, after we had turned north, would journey on again.

The next morning saw our last ride, eastwards this time to Takama on the Berbice river. We got there in the forenoon, and established ourselves in the Government rest-house overlooking the river. There is a Government reservation of several acres around Takama. The forest belt, which wraps the Berbice, is only about a quarter mile wide here,

so that the land is practically all grass country.

During the afternoon we went by bateau a mile farther upstream to visit Dornspruit, the depot of the Consolidated Balata Company. Here its courteous storekeeper showed us bundles of balata piled in stacks. It is cacao-brown in colour, and more like linoleum to the feel than anything else I can think of. Also we saw amber-coloured lumps of sweet-smelling forest gum. The storekeeper kindly took us on in his bateau with an outboard motor, first to visit Kalcuni, a little higher up the river, where there is a fairly large settlement of aborigines under the auspices of a Congregational Mission, and afterwards downstream to the Anglican church and school at Kumaka. This little settlement takes its name from a huge silk-cotton tree, called by the aborigines a "kumaka." Its bare trunk towers to a great height above all the surrounding growth, and its creeper-burdened branches spread out from the top like a Japanese umbrella. Behind the church stands a patriarch among mango-trees, guarding in its shadow three Dutch graves with inscriptions to the memory of a Dutch planter's family who died in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Of the "old-time" plantation only this mango-tree and some very large gnarled cacao-trees remain. The school is attended chiefly by the children of the aboriginal Indian and boviander folk, whose settlements dot the river banks, or are screened behind the riverside jungle. The vegetation is very fine hereabouts. I see it in my mind's eye with the golden-yellow light of the late afternoon illuminating the dense foliage, as it rises tier upon tier into the rich blue sky, whilst the river gives back the reflection in almost incredible emerald, and slowly changes to ruddy-gold as the shafts of sunset light flame overhead. Soft, indefinably fragrant scents float out upon the evening air. The brief tropical twilight breathes a blessing as it passes, and the boat makes its way through the deepening shadows of the great dark forest. It looks so grim and impenetrable that one needs an effort to realise that the open savannahs do really lie so near, and that the forest bogey which so long imprisoned them has been laid at last.

Before the late moon rose those members of our party, who were going on southward to build and establish the first Government station and represent the strong arm of law and civilisation two hundred miles away from all regular communication, left us to return to Waranana. We wished them good luck under the stars.

At 11 P.M. we heard the little river steamer pass on her way up to Dornspruit; and just as the first pale light of dawn was beginning to show itself, she appeared on her

down-stream journey, and picked us up from the bateau in which we had pushed off to meet her. We spent a very comfortable day in more or less somnolent repose on board. The Berbice river scenery is much like that of the Demerara, the same sleepy water reflecting the same dense green curtain of trees and palms ever straining towards light and air. The little settlements of river-folk tenant the banks in similar fashion, only they are fewer and farther between than on the western river. We saw many of those curious birds known as hoatzin, or "Canje pheasant" in local parlance, hanging on to the riverside foliage, displaying their beautiful pheasant-like tails and crests. These creatures are dear to scientists as a sort of missing link between reptiles and birds. The young ones use a curious claw on the wings, with which they crawl about on all-fours as it were, and they swim and dive wonderfully, though the adult birds are not aquatic. The distance to the sea from Takama is over a hundred miles, but not until twenty miles from the coast did we see the first sugar-factory chimney at Mara.

At dusk the lights of the township of New Amsterdam showed up on the east bank of the river close to its mouth; and landing at Plantation Blairmont on the west side, we found that a fine Marmon car had been sent to await us. The throb of the powerful engine, as it pursued the flying patch of light thrown ahead by the big lamps, was very stimulating. We were borne along the seventy miles of coast-road to Georgetown in less than three hours—*seventy miles*,—more than the whole journey from Arakwa to Takama! Such is the power of motor transport. Its wonderful potentialities in an unopened country cannot but thrill one's imagination, till the cry of *roads, roads, roads* haunts one's dreams, asleep or awake.

MUSINGS WITHOUT METHOD.

MR LLOYD GEORGE'S FALL — SOLICITED TESTIMONIALS — SIR ARTHUR BALFOUR TO THE RESCUE—THE GOVERNMENT'S "HARMONY OF PURPOSE"—THE IRRELEVANT DECALOGUE—FLOUTING THE PAST—MR MONTAGU'S PICTURE OF A HARMONIOUS CABINET—THE "SOLIDARITY" OF THE GOVERNMENT—LORD CURZON'S LETTER—A LETTER BOOK—TALK UPON PAPER—SHELLEY AND BYRON.

MR LLOYD GEORGE has lost his nerve. At what his worshippers thought was the zenith of his power, he threatened resignation and sought the retirement of his own Criccieth. It may be that, never a gallant fighter in a losing cause, he was terrified at the defeat of a handful of Coalition candidates. Or the obdurate Sir George Younger may have frightened him out of his autocratic complacency. Or it may even be possible, though unlikely—for his vision was never of the acutest,—that he saw his vague and vain schemes crumbling to pieces beyond hope of repair. He has thrown Ireland into anarchy; he has gambled with Egypt until she has but a small chance of recovery; he has permitted his late colleague, Mr Montagu, to arouse India from her pathetic contentment, with the result that massacre seems inevitable. Nor is this all: the triumph which he prayed he might snatch from Genoa fades from his vision; the substitution of conference by caravan for the old, efficient, respectable methods of diplomacy has brought him only ridicule; and, maybe, he finds the rehabilitation of the Bolsheviks, always near his heart, insufficient for his wayward ambition. But whatever was the momentary cause of his aberration, Mr Lloyd George lost his nerve, and, instead of coming forth and confronting a harsh world, he attempted to regain the lost favour of the people by imploring his friends and colleagues to present him with an obviously solicited testimonial.

So it was proclaimed aloud in every quarter that Mr Lloyd George was the greatest man on earth. We were invited to take a lofty pride in our one man of genius, and to look with satisfaction upon the havoc which he had wrought. And we are invited in vain. No man, in or out of politics, can safely rely upon the praise of others to restore a fallen reputation. He must still make his own speeches or do his own work if he would not lose the position he has gained, and Mr Lloyd George has declined in the public esteem at every trumpet-blast of praise. Nor has the quality of the praise

always been above suspicion. We need not attach a vast importance to the not wholly disinterested eloquence of Messrs Chamberlain and Churchill. The transitory enthusiasm of Lord Birkenhead avails not to move us, and as to the reasoned defence of Sir Arthur Balfour, we marvel not that it was well done, but that it was done at all.

For Sir Arthur, in his desire to protect his leader against the assaults of those who once were his friends and followers, is forced to make certain admissions, which seem effectively to destroy his argument. Speaking as the Conservative and Unionist representative of the City of London, he said: "For a time which is not very far from half a century I have been a member of the party to which I have always belonged, to which I still belong, and doubtless shall belong until I go to the country where political parties interest me no more." But of what use is it to belong to a party which has abandoned its principles? Sir Arthur proclaims himself a Tory and a Unionist. The Coalition, of whose deeds and words he wholly approves, is neither Tory nor Unionist. The past is "irrelevant" to it, as it is to Sir Arthur Balfour. It cares not a snap of the fingers for the tradition of our English life. It has, above all, lost all right to claim the title of Unionist, because by its surrender to Collins and his gunmen it has renounced the policy of union between Great Britain and Ireland, whence it derived its name. Sir Boyle Roche said that a bird could be in two places at once. The most alert politician cannot be in two parties at once. And if Sir Arthur Balfour still calls himself a Unionist, he must have effectually separated the name from the thing.

Indeed, he does not attempt to save himself by half-statements. He is whole-hearted in his loyalty to the "Unionists," who have disunited the Empire, to the "Tories," who have accepted, without question, a Radical policy at home and abroad. "I have belonged to many Governments," he says. "Some have been Coalition Governments; some have been purely Conservative or Unionist Governments. I have never belonged to a Government in which there was a greater harmony of purpose and singleness of end than this, or with more desire to carry out a great national policy." It is a strange statement. The Government which Sir Arthur applauds thus loftily has shown its harmony most conspicuously in the readiness with which its members have all changed their opinions at a single word of command. They have—many of them—gone to bed stern unbending Unionists, and woke up eager for disruption. For them, at any rate, coalition means instantaneous and simultaneous conversion. If there has been no "singleness of end" in their

policy, they have pursued the many ends proposed to them by their autocrat with equal and united zeal. There is no opinion which Mr Lloyd George himself has not held and renounced. There was a time when he would not parley with murderers; for a while he dallied with Valera, because he could "deliver the goods," though indeed he never had any goods to deliver; and then he went over, with a united Cabinet, to the murderers whom he had previously denounced. Is this harmony? Is this singleness of end? We do not know. All we can say of the Government is that, until the indiscipline of Mr Montagu, Mr Lloyd George changed his view as often as he liked, and his patient admirers followed him each time into the same pen.

But Sir Arthur Balfour, in the very act of praising the Government's harmony, admits that his own opinions are unchanged. If this be so, the harmony cannot be either deep or loud. "It has been my good or ill fortune," says he, "to be in the very forefront of this Irish battle for nearly forty years, ever since the great difficulty arose in 1885. Not one of my opinions on that subject have I altered. My Liberal colleagues in the Cabinet were, and are, I imagine, convinced believers in the scheme of Home Rule. We do not need to discuss those questions, because they and I admit that the circumstances have so changed that the old arguments, the old watchwords, are wholly irrelevant." But are the arguments, are the watchwords, irrelevant? We think not. Certain arguments, certain watchwords there are which never grow old, never lose their relevance. Though Sir Arthur Balfour, to be sure, does not believe in principle in politics, he confesses that he has altered none of the opinions which he held in 1885. If he keeps them as opinions, he does not allow them to influence his conduct, because the circumstances have changed. But no circumstances can change the elementary morals of a man or of a community. The decalogue should be still worthy of respect, though a "harmonious" Government finds it convenient to condone murder and mutilation. In truth, it is not so much the circumstances which have changed as the morals of the politicians. And Sir Arthur Balfour sticks to his point. "I have asked friends of mine," says he, "in what respect they imagine the principles, of which I fancy myself a faithful and consistent exponent, have ever been violated by the Coalition Government, of which for years I have been a member. They could never give me an answer, and they cannot give you an answer now, because circumstances which have developed have rendered those things antiquated and beside the mark." What Sir Arthur's friends have

failed to do, we, greatly daring, will attempt. To take but one instance: it was a fixed principle of the Tory Party, and Sir Arthur was a consistent exponent of it, that Ireland should not be given her independence. That portion of the Tory Party which has managed to get within the precincts of the Coalition has abandoned that principle, not in obedience to reason, but in that panic fear which overtakes surrendered men. And even if we pleaded that circumstances had developed which made these principles antiquated, we might say that the circumstances should have strengthened the hands of the Unionists immeasurably. For in giving the gunmen "the independence of Ireland" for a plaything, we have outraged every principle, not of politics only but of morals, and we have admitted before the world that brutality and assassination are more readily acceptable to our politicians as instruments of rebellion even than oratorical agitation and the boycott.

And Sir Arthur Balfour has no illusion. He confesses that the men with whom he is now "harmoniously" associated are responsible for the present anarchy. "We, the Unionist Party," says he, "may proudly think that we left office in 1905 with Ireland peaceable, prosperous, and contented. Ireland is now not peaceable nor prosperous nor contented. We say that that, at all events, is not our fault." That is true enough. It was not the fault of the Unionists that Ireland was permitted to travel so far upon the road of lawlessness and bloodshed, to suit the policy of Messrs Asquith and Birrell, as to make the infamous rebellion of Easter Day possible. But it is the fault of the Unionists—a fault they share with Mr Lloyd George—that Ireland is to-day still in a state of anarchy, that the gunmen are supreme in the south, that law and justice are banished from the southern counties, and that Ulster has been treated by the champions of anarchy with insult and contempt. Less than a year ago the rebellion was within a brief distance of suppression. To-day, owing to the lack of principle shown by the "Unionists," we are confronted with the duty, which shall surely be laid upon us, of reconquering Ireland. Is it enough, in excuse of our lack of governing power, to say that "circumstances have rendered those things antiquated and beside the mark"?

But, says Sir Arthur Balfour, it is perfectly easy for people to differ about the past fundamentally and to agree about the present and future. "All you have got to do"—these are his very words—"is to deal with the subjects that are relevant, and not with the subjects which are irrelevant, and that we have the sense to do." In other words, the union is irrelevant; the pun-

ishment of murder is irrelevant; it is irrelevant to protect the lives or the property of those who have served you with loyalty and devotion. Everything, in short, is irrelevant that is difficult of accomplishment. But are these things irrelevant? When the famous "treaty," which was proclaimed the greatest feat of statesmanship ever achieved, breaks down, as assuredly it will break down, can we take shelter behind irrelevancy? We shall not see that "Ulster is not coerced"—to use Sir Arthur's phrase—we shall not see that "the South of Ireland obtains that which we have promised she shall have, and that the treaty which is now before Parliament, the object of which is readily accepted by all parties, shall be carried out effectively, faithfully, truthfully in the eyes of all mankind." We shall see none of these things. The "treaty" was long since scouted by Collins and the others who signed it. It depends not on us but upon herself whether Ulster is coerced or not, for we shall not help her; and the only doubt that remains is this: when the Free State is wiped away from the map, and the Irish Republic is duly installed, will the Unionist leaders still proclaim it irrelevant, and announce, with a kind of pride, that while their opinions have undergone no change, they are still ready to work harmoniously with those who have welcomed the Irish Republic?

The truth is that nothing is irrelevant, not even the present, which no man can control; not even the future, which no man can foresee. Least of all is the past irrelevant, as Sir Arthur Balfour would have us believe. By the past we are shaped; to the past we are bound by an irrefragable link; from the past we gain whatever knowledge and inspiration are ours. He who would dispense with the past, would dispense with religion, morals, wisdom. He would be an atheist and a monster. What is the cunning of a modern demagogue if you match it against the accumulated wisdom of two thousand years? Indeed, in these days, when we are given no principle to guide us, when we have no leaders who look beyond the day after to-morrow, the one thing to which we can hold tight with some sense of security is the past, and if that be dismissed as "irrelevant," then shall we be working in the dark without hope or belief, and the end of us, as a beneficent Empire, is not far off.

But, says Sir Arthur Balfour again, we must trust Mr Lloyd George, whom it is no good to abuse. Now, he and those who acted with him are solely and wholly responsible for the state of things in Ireland and elsewhere. They have completely debauched the peaceful Ireland which the Unionists bequeathed to them in 1905. By their evil policy they made the Easter rebellion inevitable, and for

purposes of their own they spared, and even flattered, the rascals who had murdered English soldiers and had done their best to aid England's enemies. Wherefore Mr Lloyd George, who was partially responsible for these crimes, is the only living man fit to be trusted with the lives and fortunes of those who did not conspire with the Germans against Great Britain, who did not murder soldiers and policemen! We like not the security. Even if Mr Lloyd George were otherwise perfect in sainthood and a miracle of wisdom, we should still declare that his conduct of Irish affairs had placed him beyond the reach of trust and faith. Sir Arthur says that Mr Lloyd George neither bamboozles nor bullies his Unionist colleagues. Then they lead us to the slaughter in cold blood and with open eyes.

But do they? Mr Montagu, the gentleman who has succeeded in destroying the pathetic contentment of India, was suddenly dismissed from the office in which he had proved himself a public danger, and proceeded, after the habit of his kind, to betray those who had unduly exalted him. He destroyed in a moment Sir Arthur Balfour's pleasant dream of a Government working in the greatest harmony ever known. We confess that what he said came upon us with no surprise. The most careless observer of our political history could not help seeing that Mr Lloyd George had been silently and cunningly transforming our constitution. He had killed the House of Commons, and was intent upon strangling the Cabinet. He had made up his mind that he himself should be an untrammelled autocrat, that he should interfere with everybody's business, that he should absorb in himself all the power and all the responsibility which in old days was distributed justly among the members of the Cabinet. How he achieved this dangerous end we do not know. He neither bamboozled nor bullied, says Sir Arthur Balfour. Then he must be the possessor of some hypnotic gift, of which strangers to the great man know nothing. Whatever the master's influence may be, there is no doubt that Mr Montagu has suffered from it, and, once emancipated, he hastened to denounce his old leader with a violence which proves him unfitted ever to have held high office, or ever again to hold it. Sir Arthur Balfour suffers, perhaps, from an excess of loyalty to his friends and colleagues. Mr Montagu is in the other extreme: he has no loyalty at all.

We are of those who thought that Mr Montagu should never have been appointed to the office which he has perforce resigned. By race as by occupation he was unfitted to deal with the intricacies of Indian policy. If it be necessary—and we do not believe in the necessity—to employ Jews in the government of the British Empire, they should be kept

sternly at home. They should not be permitted to meddle with dependencies which can be managed only by those in whom there breathes the spirit of the Sahib. If we judge Mr Montagu's tenure of office by its results—a method which seems to have gone out of fashion—then we may pronounce it to have been a patent disaster. For the mere whim of forcing democratic institutions upon a country which did not want them and did not understand them, he has spread abroad discontent from one end of India to the other. He has been hesitating and variable. He has called Gandhi his friend on one day, and has threatened him on another. He has been as reluctant to make up his mind as Mr Lloyd George himself, and he must be held responsible for a vast deal of rebellion and bloodshed. The cheers which in the House of Commons greeted his resignation indicate clearly enough the relief which was felt on his retirement by all parties. And he took it badly. He was determined that, if he himself went down, his colleagues should suffer too, in reputation at any rate. He had one point to make—that the principle of Cabinet responsibility to which he had been sacrificed was violated every day. Yet the point was not worth making by him, because if he had objected to the violated principle he might long ago have resigned. For the rest, no one will take seriously his statement that he was thrown to the Die-hards. The Die-hards have ceased to be supremely interested in Mr Montagu, and though they desired his enforced resignation after his shameful handling of the incident of General Dyer, they are not likely to be appeased now if he leaves the stage a few days or weeks before the leader whom he covered with ridicule.

Meanwhile, Mr Montagu cracks his sides with laughter when he thinks of the "harmonious" Government described by Sir Arthur Balfour. "I would ask those who have been my colleagues," says he, "to search their hearts and realise the numerous occasions upon which they have prayed for the doctrine of Cabinet responsibility—the vital decisions of peace, the vital decisions connected with Ireland." And he has no more belief in the Coalition's "singleness of end," as Sir Arthur Balfour calls it, than in Cabinet responsibility. "Believe me, you make the principle of Coalition ridiculous," he said, "if you try to apply it by standing first on one leg and then on the other; by making up for and paying the price of every Liberal measure by doing something for the Conservatives the next day." We like the Coalition far less than does Mr Montagu, but again we assert that it is not a right and proper thing for him, in a moment of anger, to betray the secrets of the Cabinet of which he was lately

a member. If he disapproved of what the Government did, he had the remedy in his own hands: he might have resigned, as we have said, when he chose. He had no business to stay within the Cabinet as long as he could, and then when he was sternly excluded, to cover it with ridicule and contempt. In any case, a share of the many crimes which the Cabinet has committed will rest for ever upon his shoulders.

So Mr Montagu laid about him lustily and without discrimination. If he were disgraced, he would do his best that others should share that disgrace. The vague charges of "genius" and wizardry which he brought against the Prime Minister needed no rebutting. The charges which he brought against Lord Curzon were at once more precise and more damaging. The publication of the manifesto of the Indian Government in favour of a revised treaty with Turkey was an evident embarrassment to the Empire. It was peculiarly embarrassing to Lord Curzon, whose duty it was presently to discuss the Eastern Question in Paris. But the reckless Mr Montagu, so far from showing any penitence, directed his heaviest blows against the minister he had most deeply injured. Nor did he take the trouble to be sure of his facts. He hinted, indeed, that Lord Curzon had connived at his evil-doing; he referred in insolent terms to a letter which Lord Curzon had written him; he reported his own version of private conversations; and thus he was guilty of a breach of manners which, as Lord Curzon said, "must be without parallel in Cabinet procedure." Lord Curzon, argued Mr Montagu, did not intervene to stop the publication of the Viceroy's telegram. To which Lord Curzon replies that when he protested against the publication—"of course you will not authorise publication without reference to the Cabinet"—Mr Montague's retort was, "I have already done so, on Saturday last." No wonder Lord Curzon was "dumbfounded" by the avowal.

Still more amazing is the incident of the letter. The passage in Mr Montagu's speech, delivered at Cambridge, which drew the loudest applause was that in which he described Lord Curzon's protest. "But what did Lord Curzon do? " asked Mr Montagu. "He maintained silence in the Cabinet, and contented himself that evening with writing to me one of those plaintive, hectoring, bullying, complaining letters, which are so familiar to his colleagues and to his friends, which ended with a request—what?—not to discuss the matter in the Cabinet, but in future not to allow publication of such documents without consultation with him." If the story of the letter, as told by Mr Montagu, was amazing, we wonder still more at its baselessness. The letter, read aloud by Lord Curzon,

proved that "instead of requesting, as alleged by Mr Montagu at Cambridge, that he should in future discuss such matters with me without bringing them to the Cabinet, he said, on the contrary, precisely the reverse." And there the matter ends.

It is worth while to consider this episode, because it illustrates more clearly than a mass of argument the decadence of our English politics. At any other time in our history it would have been impossible. The facts of the case left Lord Curzon "unable to determine whether the private or public conduct of the late Secretary for India has been the more inexplicable and surprising. And," added Lord Curzon, "in using these adjectives I am surprised at my own moderation." Nevertheless the facts, as now we know them, are the natural consequence of the bad system inaugurated by Mr Lloyd George. Where the head is undisciplined, how shall you expect discipline in his subordinates? The Prime Minister, by making himself supreme in every office, has destroyed the ancient methods of government. He has encouraged in others the same lawlessness which he practises himself. There are men in our present "harmonious" Cabinet obstinately opposed to one another in matters of policy, and they stay on together, working for multiple ends and at cross purposes. In truth, until Mr Montagu resigned under compulsion, resignation, once the safeguard of honest politics, had gone out of fashion. If you asked a Minister how he could stay in a Government to which in essentials he was opposed, he answered that if he left, the work which he was doing would be worse done. Even if that were true, it was no sufficient answer. Without the final resource of resignation nothing will ever be rightly done by our democratic Government. Those who are chosen by universal suffrage still feel it hard to make an honest truthful appeal to the electorate. If you take away the threat of resignation, you will suffer until the end of time from autocratic irresponsible Prime Ministers.

Thus the episode of Mr Montagu is not without its salutary lessons. It has been proved, what we had indeed already surmised, that the Government of Great Britain is conducted upon the principle of "go as you please." There appears to be no sense of corporate responsibility, no system of check or revision. Each one of our Ministers has done what he chose, unless indeed the Prime Minister came into his office, and then he resumed his humble place as a clerk who registered the decrees of his superior. As for Mr Montagu, we can shed no tear for him. He has been excluded from an office which, as we have said, he should never have held, and he has shown in his going that he had neither the temper

nor the sensitiveness which should belong to a Minister. Had he retired in the dignity of silence, he might perhaps have claimed the sympathy of partisans. He put on no sackcloth; he scattered no ashes on his head; he preferred to attack those who had been his friends, to reveal secrets and to misrepresent correspondence. Wherefore it is clear that he is incapacitated from holding office in any Government of the future which respects itself, and upon this result the country may be congratulated.

And the Coalition, already weakened, is no stronger for the dispute. It is not likely to stagger on even until the next General Election. Its leaders have as little discretion as knowledge of affairs. They vary from day to day in their estimate of men and things. Now we are told that the captain will never surrender to the cabin-boy; now we hear that the Die-hards are the salt of the Tory Party, and that Lord Birkenhead will never cast them out. Truly there is no chance of that. There is a very good chance, on the other hand, that the Die-hards will cast out Lord Birkenhead. That, indeed, will be one of the first duties of the Die-hards—to cast out all those who have been faithless to their principles, who, under cover of the Unionism which they have betrayed, ask the support of honourable Tories who have never taken Mike Collins by the hand, and who in no circumstances would submit to the blackmail of murderers.

Professor George Saintsbury is a fortunate man. Almost alone of his age and generation he is acclaimed by the Georgians, who think that little is worth doing that they themselves have not done. But Professor Saintsbury is still their man. They study his books, and they praise them with an unstinted generosity. And the reason is not far to seek. Professor Saintsbury reads with enthusiasm and writes with what Hazlitt called "gusto." He is at all points a full man, for reading, as Bacon saith, has made him that. No literature and no period come amiss to him. In the best sense his mind is encyclopædic. Yet he never exhausts a subject. He tries neither his own attention nor yours, and no matter what he writes of, he always leaves a margin for talk and argument. Though he is in no sense a gossip, he cannot keep himself out of his own books. The man will peer through the printed page, and he convinces you of his sincerity by giving you scraps of autobiography, stray reminiscences of his adventures among books.

A new work by Professor Saintsbury, then, is an event. We know that we shall find therein the truth as it reveals itself to an acute and joyous brain. When he wrote of wine, he enchanted us all, and in

this last book[1] of his we discover the same enthusiasm for letters which in his book about wine we found for vintages. He begins, as he should, at the beginning—tells us what is to be known about the art of letter-writing as it was practised among the Greeks and Romans, and then settles down to describe and exemplify the best that we have of this kind in English. Nor could he make a better start in English than with the Paston letters, that vast storehouse of domestic history which is worth more to those who would understand the annals of our land than a ton of graver records. And as he takes you through the centuries, he explains as he goes what is the essence of a good letter and a good letter-writer. To excel in the art is to possess a gift of intimacy which is bestowed upon few. The true letter-writer must be neither self-conscious nor a slave to pretence. He must be willing to show the worst as well as the best of himself. He must put away all vanities of thought or style. Above all, he must never write like a book. Bookish English is no fit instrument for him. And even when he has done all this, he may yet fail in the delicate art. We might have thought, for instance, after reading his 'Diary,' that Samuel Pepys was designed by Providence to be a writer of letters. The intimacy, the frankness, the nonchalance, the best qualities of epistolary exchange, are discernible in the 'Diary.' They are all absent from his letters. He could talk upon paper to himself, not to others. It was, after all, the cipher which kept his style always fresh and fearless. When he expressed himself on paper to his friends, he became acutely conscious that it was Samuel Pepys, the industrious official, who held the pen. The letters, in brief, as Professor Saintsbury says, "are the very opposite of the famous and delectable 'Diary.'" A strange inexplicable pose, as of shyness, comes between us and the writer of them. "They are perfectly 'proper,'" writes Professor Saintsbury, "and for the most part extremely dull, while propriety is certainly not the most salient characteristic of the 'Diary.'" Here is a mystery which none may pierce. We must take the good things which the gods give us, and be content.

To talk upon paper—that is the real art of the letter-writer; and it is not strange that the golden age of the art was the eighteenth century—in France as in England. For the eighteenth century was the century of talk, of talk elegantly enough artificial to be put upon paper without losing its effect. To it belong Horace Walpole and Gray and Cowper, our three finest artists

[1] A Letter Book, Selected and Introduced by George Saintsbury. London: J. Bell & Sons.

in this kind. And before them came Swift and Bolingbroke and Pope—masters all—and the great Chesterfield, who need not fear competitors in any society. To all these Professor Saintsbury does full justice, and we are glad to see that he does not qualify the praise, which he gives to Chesterfield, in order to agree with the substance of Johnson's petulant criticism. "As a matter of relevant fact," writes Professor Saintsbury, "the letters . . . are full of sound advice, clear common-sense, and ripe experience of the world. The manners they recommend are not those of any but a very exceptional 'dancing-master': they are those of a gentleman. The temper that they inculcate and that they exhibit in the inculcator is positively kindly and relatively correct." That is well and truthfully said, and it will help to clear away the mist of misunderstanding in which the Johnsonian eloquence has enwrapped a great man.

So with a deft hand Professor Saintsbury touches the strength and weakness of his subjects. He admits the manifest folly and coxcombry of Horace Walpole, but declares that that does not prevent him from being one of the best letter-writers in English. "Their style," says Professor Saintsbury of Walpole's letters, "is not a matter so much of phrase as of attitude. His revelations of character—his own, that is to say, for Horace was no conjuror with any one else's—are constant but not deeply drawn. He cannot, or at least does not, give a plot of any kind. Every letter is a sort of *review* of the subject—larger or smaller—from the really masterly accounts of the trial of the Jacobite lords after the 'Forty-five to the most trivial notices of people going to see 'Strawberry'; of remarkable hands at cards; of Patty Blount (Pope's Patty) in her autumn years passing his windows with her gown tucked up because of the rain." And much more to the same purpose. Thus Professor Saintsbury sets Horace Walpole before us, as he sate him down to amuse his friends, and reveals to us the true purpose of letter-writing, which is less to give information than to transmit through the post a state of mind and the whim of the moment.

It would be difficult to find a sharper contrast to Walpole in wit and manner than William Cowper, and Cowper was an artist of equal skill with the great Horace himself. As Professor Saintsbury does well to remind us, Coleridge called Cowper's letters "divine chit-chat," and truly it doesn't matter what it is that Cowper elects to discourse about. "If his conversation," as the Professor writes—"and some of the few *habitués* of Olney say it was—was anything like his letter-writing, it is no wonder that people sat over even breakfast for an hour to 'satisfy

sentiment not appetite' — as they said with that slight touch of priggishness which has been visited upon them heavily, but which perhaps had more to do with their merits than more mannerless periods will allow."

The nineteenth century, so far as it has at present revealed itself to us, has two letter-writers who need not fear comparison with the highest. They are Lamb and Byron. Here again we have a sharply visible contrast. Lamb, whimsical always, wrote his letters in the same vein as he wrote his essays. His eye was still on the phrase of the past, though it contemplated the happening of the present. If he would have forgotten that he was a man of letters, his temperament did not allow him to forget it, and his letters and his published works are, so to say, all of a piece. The Byron of the letters we may seek and sometimes find in 'Don Juan,' and in 'Don Juan' alone. He does not allow the rhetoric of 'Childe Harold,' for instance, to come between him and the friends whom he addresses in his letters. Yet for all their apparent carelessness, these are packed with literary allusions, and could have been written only by a greedy and omnivorous reader. The qualities of "strength and sincerity" are always there, and if sometimes Byron is lacking in manners, if now and again he is so little of a gentleman that he kisses and tells, time, which has carried off his victims, has lessened his offence. At any rate he remains among the best of his century in this art, and as we cannot have too much of a good thing, we welcome the two volumes of hitherto unpublished letters which Mr Murray has given us.[1]

The best of Professor Saintsbury is that he tempts us at times to disagreement, yet even when we are thus tempted we meet him in argument with an obvious diffidence. However, we must write a word of protest against his high estimate of Shelley's letters. Matthew Arnold, in a moment of perversity, said that Shelley's letters were more valuable than his poetry. Professor Saintsbury, of course, does not go so far as this. Nevertheless he gives them the loftiest praise, declares that they carry with them much of their author's idiosyncracy, and finally asserts that "they connect and complete the Shelley of the poems themselves in a manner for which we cannot be too thankful." Now this is a judgment which we cannot accept. Shelley's letters have always seemed to us to lack the essential charm of letters—naturalness. They are composed in bookish English — sometimes even they savour of journalism. In our view they are artistically

[1] Lord Byron's Correspondence, chiefly with Lady Melbourne, Mr Hobhouse, the Hon. Douglas Kinnaird, and P. B. Shelley. Edited by John Murray.

far behind the letters of Byron and of Keats. Take a brief passage, for instance, from a letter included in Mr Murray's edition of Byron's 'Correspondence.' Shelley is writing from London in September 1816, and in these terms expresses his political fears: "There are as yet no glaring symptoms of disaffection, though the distress is said to be severe. But winter is the season when the burthen will be felt. Most earnestly do I hope that despair will not drive the people to premature and useless struggles." You would not be surprised if you culled these rather priggish lines from a leading article. They have an odd sound in the letter of a poet, and you have but to open the letters of Keats where you will, to see that he could talk to his friends upon paper with far better grace and spirit than his great contemporary.

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